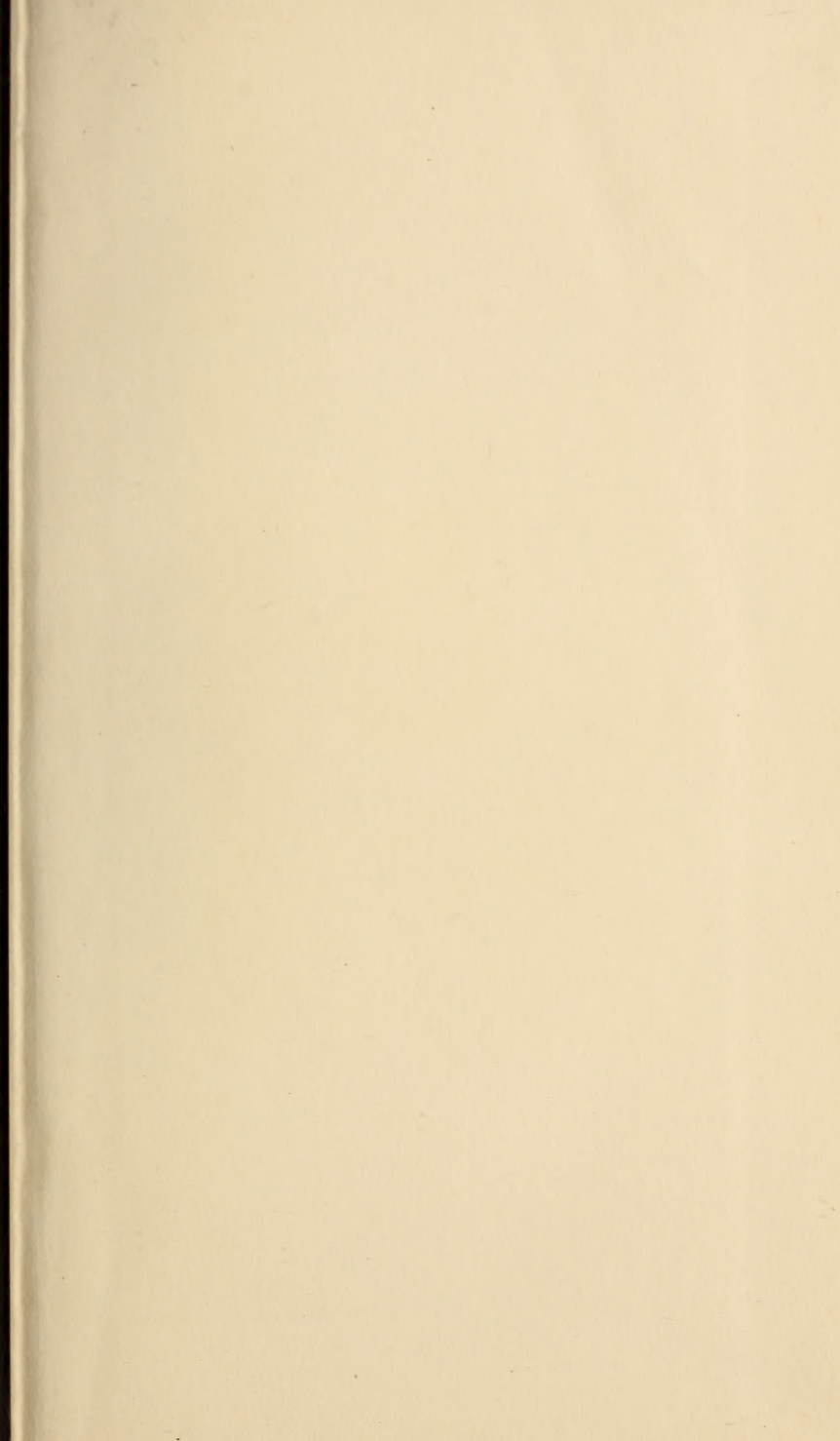
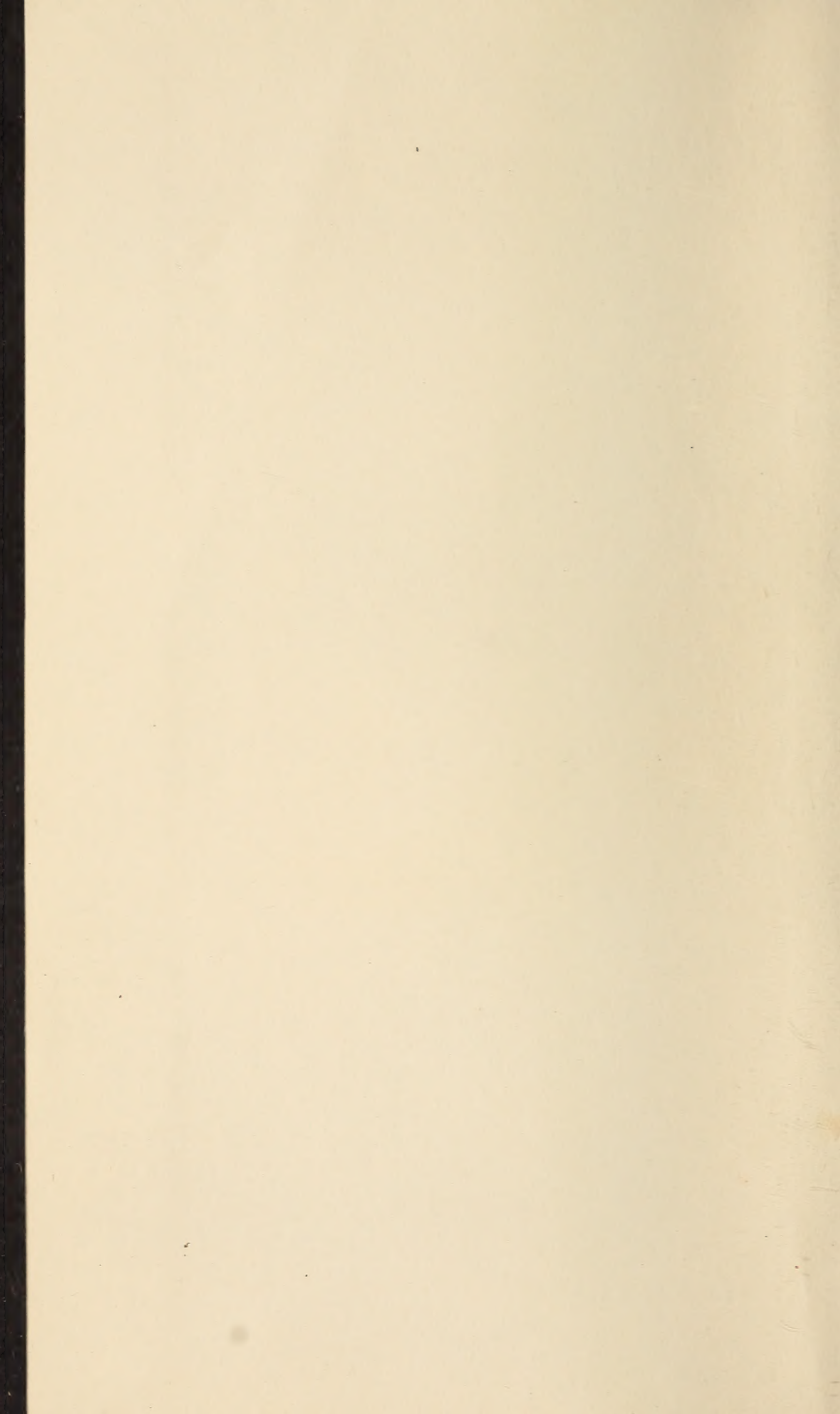


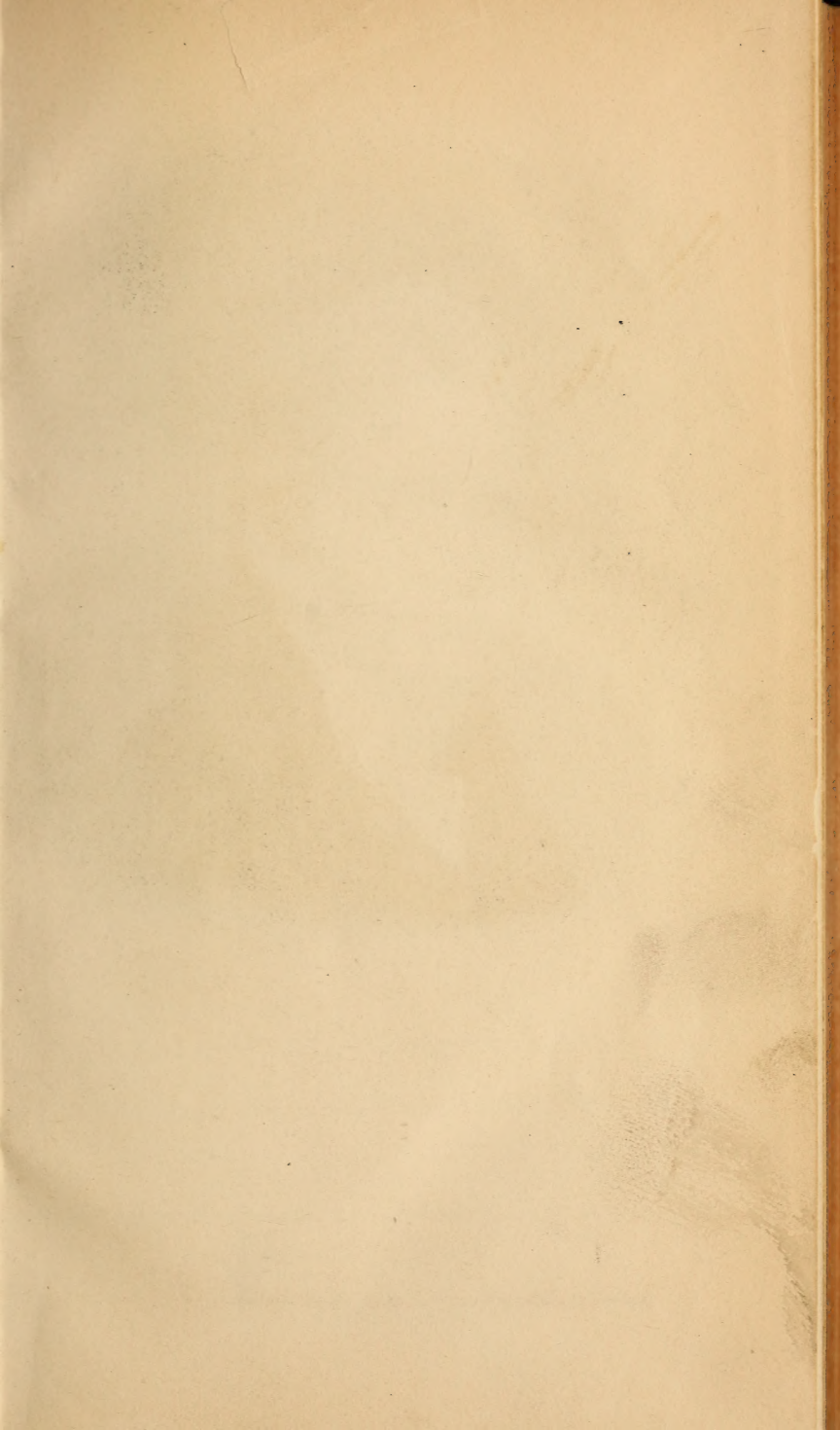


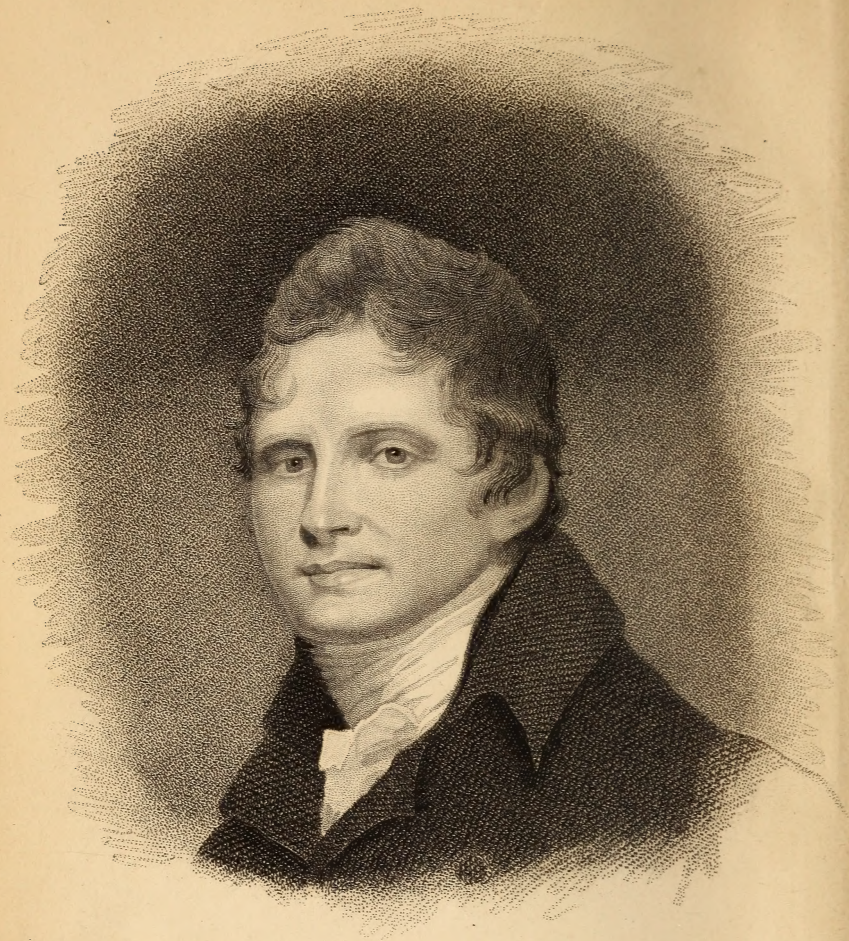
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Thomas Brown - M.D.

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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LECTURES
ON
ETHICS.

BY
THOMAS BROWN, M.D.
LATE PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

WITH A PREFACE,
BY
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PREFACE.

THEY who have read Dr. Brown's Lectures must at once be sensible, that there is not the same proportional amount of severe and searching analysis in the Ethical part of his course, which they find in the first volume, occupied with his investigations and views on the Mental Philosophy. This is partly due to the nature of the subject. Not that there is not room in this department for the exercise of a most profound and subtle discrimination, both in making good a just description of the mental processes and phenomena which have to do with our states of moral judgment and moral feeling, and in assigning the objective principles of the science. But over and above the strict philosophy of the subject, there is in it a high practical importance, possessing in itself the most urgent claims on the attention of the Professor; and making it indeed an imperative duty that he should pass onward from the laws, whether of human emotion or

thought, to the lessons and the obligations of human virtue. There was, besides, a great temptation—were it for nothing else than the relief and relaxation of his students, after the fatigue of those arduous speculations through which he had before conducted them—that he should regale both himself and them, by setting forth in perspective the grace and loveliness of those virtues the principle of which he had just been labouring to explore. Let us not wonder, then, that the philosophical *savant* should, on such occasions, have become the rhetorician or the monitor; and, indeed, we should have held it an unpardonable defect, had he not felt the impulse to communicate of his own enthusiasm for the beautiful and the good to the youth who sat before him. They who personally knew him will at once recognise, in some of the representations which are here given, a picture of that very gentleness and refinement by which himself was characterized. It is this mixture of the more popular and engaging with things of abstruser quality which, in our opinion, makes it so advisable that these Lectures should be given to the world in the form of a separate publication.

But it may well and rightly be asked, Does the volume now given of Brown's Ethical Lectures, does it present us either with a perfect theory of virtue and of man's moral constitution on the one hand, or with a perfect directory of moral conduct upon the other? Our brief and general reply to this question is, that, in our opinion, such a work still is, and may long

remain, a desideratum,—not in the literature of England only, but in the literature of the world. But we ask in turn, What would have become of any of the sciences, all of which are progressive, if no work had been valued or recommended till the science had reached, (what none of the sciences has yet done, and perhaps never will in our present state,)—had reached its point of greatest possible advancement, and a treatise could have been written upon it in a style altogether worthy of the then attained optimism? There is many a book which has failed, and must necessarily fail, in giving the full and perfect exposition of a subject; and which yet deserves a high, and it may even be for a time the highest place, in the literature of the subject. It is upon the strength of each successive work, as by the footsteps of an ascending ladder, that all science is carried upward to higher and higher elevations, — keeping its ground perhaps for a generation or two, and yet not superseding its predecessors, so as that they shall altogether vanish for some ages at least from the sight and remembrance of the literary public. Such has been the history of learning from the beginning of the world; and hence the danger of coming forth with a eulogy on a work which might be altogether preposterous, if given without respect to the future enlargements, or even the future corrections, that may be awaiting its doctrines and its views. It is true that a Professor in a college is in the best and likeliest circumstances for the preparation of a treatise on the subject of his own chair, which

might bid fair, if not to be complete, — for who can assign a limit to any of the sciences?—at least, as far as it goes, to be invulnerable. By the successive modelling and remodelling, year after year, of the prelections which he delivers, he may bequeath to his successors a specimen of very choice authorship. It is true we read in the *Life of Dr. Brown* that he added and amended very little upon his course, after the second year of his professorship. But another explanation might be given of this than that he thought his preparations did not admit either of further enlargement or further rectification; though it must be allowed by all to have been a truly marvellous achievement that so great a work should have been accomplished within so brief a period. My own theory, however, on the matter is, the dislike, which *Dr. Brown* may have shared in with some other authors, to the business of recasting, or retouching in any way, their older compositions. It seems to me identical with the dislike which many painters feel at making a copy of their own pictures; and so both the writer and the artist find themselves more congenially employed when engaged with new works and new objects altogether. But whatever cause may be assigned for this peculiarity in the construction of *Brown's Lectures*, it hinders not that the volume to which we now prefix these sentences may both be entitled to a most respectful attention from every student of moral science, and to a place in many a general library; and yet that there might remain

much to supplement, and some things to modify, ere a work shall be framed which might abide a textbook and a standard work upon Ethical Science to all generations.

With these explanations, we feel ourselves at perfect liberty either to animadvert upon, or to eulogize, the various passages of this work, just as we find occasion. We have been called upon to write a commendatory preface: But, besides the presumption of such an unnecessary office for a work of such high public estimation, we hold it a better introduction to any work, if a heading for it be at all required, that, instead of an unqualified panegyric, it should be more in the character of an honest and impartial review. But the very few pages we can afford forbid any formal undertaking of this sort; and meanwhile—where there is such a body of sound principle so ably and eloquently advocated, and such an immeasurable superiority over all the merely *human* systems of Moral Philosophy, or those where the science is treated apart from Revelation, which we are acquainted with—we are most unwilling to refuse our testimony, and the more as we are permitted to accompany it with such suggestions as we venture to think might be profitable to the reader. We have only to apologize for the sententious air of the deliverances which follow,—sententious, because within our narrow limits, necessarily short, and not because framed in an authoritative or unkind spirit towards one whose writings, when taken in conjunction with those of certain

others, and more especially of Bishop Butler and Dugald Stewart, might—once that the philosophy of the Christian argument is better understood—prove eminently helpful in propitiating the higher reason of the country, and gaining it over to the sacred cause of Truth and Righteousness.

First, then, we are persuaded, that had he revised these rapidly prepared, and, because gotten up with something like the speed and power of magic, for the exigencies of a class, these wonderful Lectures,—had he revised them into a wary and well-digested treatise, we feel hopeful that not one expression would have escaped from him, which could have at all countenanced the idea that virtue was a thing of mere arbitrary constitution, or at all dependent for its reality and being on the mere organism of man's moral nature. The truth is, that his own Natural Theology, apart from the scripture which tells us that God made man in His own image, leads to a different conclusion. We can certainly *imagine* a race so constituted as to do homage to a standard and code of morality different from, nay opposite to, our own in all its articles. But then, as Dr. Brown well expresses it, we must have been created by a different Being from Him, who, in constituting us such as we are, hath given us an irresistible evidence for the virtues of our estimation having had their residence, as so many eternal verities, in the constitution of the Godhead. The habit of substituting for the objective reality of things the feelings or the perceptions of our own minds, would lead, if

carried out, to a universal Pyrrhonism, from which our only refuge is in the belief of a Deity. We can fancy an atheist to limit the reign and the reality of virtue, by looking on it as commensurate only with the species. But he who believes "the universality of virtue to be coextensive with the minds in which its emotions arise," (p. 25,) and further believes that he thus feels because thus fashioned by the hand and after the mind of the Deity, must mean a great deal more by the essential distinctions of morality; and, carrying the speculation upward to the Being in whom these emotions originate, must regard virtue as a thing of stable existence, having its fixed and concrete reality in the divine nature.

But the very principle on which we should modify certain expressions of Dr. Brown, in regard to the objective and the subjective of human virtue, is the principle on which we hold him to be so eminently sound in his observations on what he has chosen to designate as the Theological System of Morals. Our only exception, in fact, is to the title which he has affixed to it. The theory which resolves all virtue into the law or will of God, may be termed, or as some, we fear, would feel, may be stigmatized, by having the name fastened on it of the Theological System of Ethics. We can only say that it is not the Ethical System of our best theologians. We are sure that it forms no part of the creed or theology of those whom we hold to be the soundest and ablest thinkers in our science. The primary fountain-head of morality is

placed by them, not in the will of God, but in what is prior to will, and to all jurisprudence,—in the nature of God. Virtue, when impressed on a tablet of jurisprudence, whether regarded as the law of the heart or as the law of a written revelation, they hold to be but a transcript from the anterior tablet of the divine character. It is true that, along with Dr. Brown, they esteem it as the prime duty of man to obey the will of God; but not because that will is the creator of virtue, which, uncreated as the Deity himself, forms the eternal rectitude of an eternal and all-perfect Being. On this subject, along with the single objection we have made to his nomenclature, we hold Dr. Brown to have argued most ably and successfully; and can assure his many philosophical admirers that our best and highest theologians think with him—that virtue is right, not because God wills it, but that God wills it because it is right.

And there is another most important coincidence between the ethical views of Dr. Brown and what is conceived by the ablest expounders of Christian truth to be orthodox in theology. We esteem it to be one of his most successful achievements, the utter demolition which he has effected of the Selfish System of Morals; in which category is included the Moral Philosophy of Dr. Paley, as being but an enlargement of the Selfish System—the one, properly so called, making the essence of virtue to lie in the pursuit of our own good in time; and the other, still in the pursuit of our own good, but of our good in eternity.

The principle which most avails him in the work of refutation is that for which the world was first indebted to Bishop Butler, in one of his Fifteen Sermons, which, taken all in all, form a most invaluable repository of sound ethical doctrine, whether as grounded on the lessons of strictly moral science, or on the admirable and original views presented by their author, of man's moral constitution. The principle to which we now advert is the distinction which Butler so well elucidates, between the object on which our affection rests and terminates, and the accompanying pleasure which is felt in the indulgence of that affection. The object of a virtuous affection is distinct from the pleasure which accompanies its indulgence; and yet the stronger and more intense that affection, the greater will be the enjoyment that is yielded by its gratification. And so the object of our love to God is God himself, and not the pleasure that we feel in loving Him; and yet the more intense that love, and so the freer from all taint of selfishness, the greater will be the enjoyment of self; or, in other words, the more disinterested the affection, the greater will be that resulting happiness which is at once its consequence and its reward. Would that the evangelical system were better understood by academic men—when it would at once be recognised that it stands not more distinguished from the meagre and less peculiar forms which are opposed to it, by the articles of its creed, than by the purer and loftier virtues of its practical directory. The

distaste for its scriptural and practical technology might at length give way, should it come to be perceived that the true design of the economy which it unfolds is the restoration to man of that godlike character which, in the eye of our best philosophers and our best poets, forms the *optimum maximum* of morality — an elevation never to be attained but through a process which the Bible describes in its own language, when it tells of our being “sanctified by faith,” and our being “renewed after the image of Him who created us in righteousness and true holiness.”

We strongly recommend to the readers of this volume that they peruse along with it the Sermons of Bishop Butler, as two works, both of which stand alike high in the existent literature of Moral Philosophy, and both peculiarly fitted to be the guides and the accompaniments, and perhaps in some instances the correctives of each other. It will be found in particular that the singularly able and conclusive reasoning of Brown against the System of Utility, derives its utmost degree of strength and illustration from the distinction already referred to, as having been first made by Butler, between the terminating object of any mental tendency or desire, and the pleasure which attends the indulgence of it. He by this single distinction has laid the axe to the root both of the Selfish System in Morals and of the System of Utility; and in the felicitous analogy which he has pointed out between any of our special

affections, the virtuous affection if we will, and the appetite of hunger—we are made clearly to perceive the principle on which the refutation of both these theories might be made to rest. There is an instant pleasure to self in the exercise of compassion, just as there is an instant pleasure to self in the act of eating; yet the pleasure in neither of these cases is the object in view—that object being in the one case the relief of a fellow-creature in distress, and in the other the relief of hunger. And there is a posterior benefit both to self and to society in all the virtues, as, for example, veracity and justice, just as there is a posterior benefit to the animal economy in the use of food; yet, without either of these benefits being in view, man will eat under the impulse of hunger, and he will act virtuously under the impellent calls of truth, and integrity, and honour. There are other subjects besides on which the reader will attain to a greater satisfaction and sense of fulness, by reading the two authors in conjunction, and thus blending together the lights which are respectively cast on their common argument: first, by the sagacity of Butler, and then by the ingenuity along with the fine flowing illustrative eloquence and the inimitable touches of grace and delicacy which are strewn over the field of his inquiries by Dr. Thomas Brown. But, in his masterly exposure of Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, the latter of those two great metaphysicians and moralists whom we have now been comparing together, necessarily stands alone; and we gladly

refer to this chapter of his work, as one of the happiest specimens of his great argumentative and analytic powers.

But there is one other occasion on which Butler must be called in as an indispensable auxiliary, to rectify and supplement what we cannot help regarding as a serious deficiency in the speculations of Dr. Brown, who has not once adverted to the greatest discovery, and in itself the most important and precious truth within the whole compass of ethical science; we mean the famous doctrine which, though felt in all ages and by every possessor of a moral nature, was first announced to the world by the illustrious English prelate, under the title of the Supremacy of Conscience. The doctrine itself cannot be got rid of by any exceptions which might be taken to this title, or even though Dr. Brown should have succeeded in his condemnation of the name; for he will never be able to rid us of the notion of a moral sense. But the truth is that we like his conception, and hold it to be a felicitous one, by which, instead of viewing the mind as we should an organic structure, made up of various faculties and parts, he looks on the mind as one and indivisible, but with the susceptibility, at the same time, of passing into various states; so that it is the whole mind which at one time wills, and at another time remembers, and at another time judges, and at another feels a moral recoil from one sort of deed or character and a lively moral approbation of another. We do not quarrel with that mode of

apprehending the matter, according to which all these are viewed as distinct states rather than as distinct faculties of the mind—though, for the convenience of language and its needful abbreviation, there must for each class of like phenomena be devised one summary expression, that might be comprehensive of them all; and so we have had recourse to the general words of will, and memory, and judgment: nor can we very well see why the class of our moral phenomena and feelings should not have the advantage of some such generical term, too, and the moral sense should not continue to be employed as the brief and comprehensive designation of them. For ourselves, we no more object to the language which tells of a moral sense than we should object to the language which tells of a moral nature; nor do we feel that we any more violate the simplicity of the mind in the employment of such language, than we violate the simplicity of any material substance, as lead, when we speak of its fusibility, or any other of the properties which belong to it. On the application of a certain heat to this metal, it passes into a state of fluidity; just as in the contemplation of certain acts, be they good or evil, the mind passes into the state of moral feeling. Nor do we perceive any violence done to the philosophy of either subject when we speak of fusibility as a property or power in the one case, or of the conscience and moral sense as being one of the powers or properties of mind in the other. But, be this as it may, the glorious doctrine, or as it may be termed the

glorious discovery of Bishop Butler, can no more be got rid of by Dr. Brown's proposed reform in the nomenclature of the science, than by the hypothesis of Sir James Mackintosh respecting the generation of the human conscience. Let the phenomena and feelings of our moral nature be reduced to whatever term of phraseology, or to whatever process of formation they may, the doctrine of Butler can in no way be got rid of but by an inadequate and therefore untrue description of the phenomena themselves. It is enough that in every instance of a moral wrong, there is along with the recoil of an offended moral sensibility, the plaint and remonstrance of a felt invasion on a rightful sovereignty—the sovereignty of what may not in fact, but what ought in justice, to be a ruling principle of the mind. The supremacy of conscience is but a compendious expression for the thousands and thousands of such phenomena, of constant and every day occurrence wherever humanity is to be found. It may not be at all times, nay it may seldom in our degenerate race, be the sovereign *de facto*; but it is recognised and done universal homage to, as the sovereign *de jure*—the homage, we mean, of a felt conviction, though not of an actual obedience. The loyalty to virtue may be universally fallen from, and yet it be universally felt that the loyalty is due. Now, in the descriptions of Dr. Brown, the moral emotion seems as if bereft of this capital and most important peculiarity, and spoken of only as one of the many forces which come into play within the

human constitution—there to meet with other forces which, according to the relative degree of their prevalence and power, may or may not have the superiority over it. That they often have the actual superiority is the melancholy experience of all history: but the rightful superiority of the moral element always remains with it, having the suffrages and the sentiments of all men in its favour—its place in the mechanism of our spirits being that of a regulator in a watch, making it clear, even amid the aberrations and disturbances of a machinery which had gone into disorder, that as the time-piece was made to move regularly, so man was made to move virtuously. We have no space for the further illustrations which might be given of this subject; but would earnestly advise the reader of this volume to supplement the deficiency of which we complain, by a careful perusal and study of Bishop Butler's Sermons upon Human Nature.

His treatment of the elementary questions in morals, forms the most philosophical part of this volume. When he passes from these to the description and detail of the particular virtues, he very much drops the analyst; and, instead of a laborious and severe scrutiny into first principles, sets before his readers the most beautiful sketches and representations of character. Our only remark is, that in the glowing rapidity of these compositions, the student may be betrayed into a forgetfulness of the lessons which had formerly been given to him—as, for example, when

following his great master, while he expatiates on the excellencies of truth and justice, he may be apt to lose sight of the argument by which the system of utility had been so ably disposed of; and, because of the undoubted subservience of these two moralities to the good of society, which is chiefly dwelt upon in this passage of the work, is in some danger after all of becoming a utilitarian. It is here that the exuberant eloquence of Dr. Brown requires to be chastened by the more cautious statements of Dugald Stewart on this subject, in his "Outlines of Moral Philosophy." It is true that Dr. Brown had previously demonstrated, in grappling with the theory of Hume, that though all the virtues were useful, it is not utility which constitutes all virtuousness; and the actual harmony which obtains between the beneficial and the right, he regards as a contingent harmony, which he resolves into the will of God: so that, instead of perverting this great and undoubted fact, in order to vitiate the ethical system, he turns it to the proper and legitimate purpose of strengthening therewith the foundations of Natural Theology. And it is further true, that Dugald Stewart concedes the possibility of benevolence, or a regard to utility, being the sole principle of action in the Deity. Instead of which, we should look both on truth and justice as having an independent virtuousness of their own, even in the character of the Deity; nor can we help regarding the doctrine of the atonement, as a most impressive evidence in favour of this opinion, and as definitively

fixing what, amid the contest of these great authorities, seems to be conjectural and loose in the speculations of philosophy. It appears to us, however, that Dr. Brown has fallen into an error which is not chargeable upon Stewart, when he affirms that for every duty between man and man, there is an obligation on the one side, and a counterpart right on the other. It is the duty of all men to be honest and true; and all men have a right to the payment of the debts which are owing, or the fulfilment of the promises which have been made to them. But it follows not, that because it may be the duty of one man to be benevolent to another, this other has therefore a right to his benevolence. And it were a contradiction in terms to say, that when it may be the duty of one man to forgive an offender, the offender has therefore a right to forgiveness. It is therefore more than a factitious or scholastic distinction, which has been instituted between the duties of perfect and imperfect obligation, whatever objections may lie against the language which expresses it. The distinction itself has a real foundation in man's moral nature, and by not proceeding on it the most serious evils have been committed in the business of legislation.

But while we have held it our duty to point out some of the articles in his ethical creed on which we differ from our estimable author, we should hold it, at the same time, a most serious deficiency on the part of the ethical student, not to be fully acquainted with him. There are some doctrines in the science which

he has done so much to illustrate and adorn, in which still there remains much to controvert and much to be settled, ere they can be so conclusively and fully established as to meet with universal acceptance. But the beauty of such moral pictures as he has drawn, and an enthusiasm like his on the side of goodness and truth, must find an echo in every bosom; and will meet with an abiding testimony from men of wisdom and worth throughout all ages.

We can spare but one word for the Natural Theology, which concludes this volume. It deserves a high rank among the highest works of this class; almost all of which, however, treat the subject without any the most distant attempt to assign the relation in which it stands to the Christian Theology. Now holding, as we do, that the most important function of the Natural, is that of guiding the way to our Revealed Theology, by evincing how it is that the desiderata of the one are met by the counterpart doctrines of the other, we cannot but express our preference for such treatises as serve to demonstrate the harmony between them, thus making Natural Theology fulfil the purpose ascribed to the law of bringing men to Christ.

These strictures on the works of Dr Brown, do not proceed from any feeling of hostility, but are prompted by our high sense of their importance. We could speak not merely of our great estimation, but of our personal gratitude for his writings. There is no author who has not expressly treated of revelation,

whose mental philosophy suggests so many accordances between the science of mind and the subject-matter of Christianity. From the wide territory of thought over which he expatiates, there is no enlightened student, enlightened we mean both in philosophy and in holy writ, who might not gather from it fresh proofs and illustrations on the side of the Christian argument. And even for the practical objects, we are persuaded, whether of the Christian teacher whose office it is to prepare the weekly lessons of the pulpit for the instruction of his fellow-men, or of the Christian scholar who is bent on the advancement of his own personal religion — should either of them but dwell thoughtfully and intelligently on the pages of Dr. Brown, he will find, of many views which are given there of the workings of our nature, that they shed a pleasing and confirmatory light on what may be termed the moral dynamics of the gospel.

Among Christians, there is often a sensitive jealousy and dislike of all human philosophy — a sickliness and fearfulness of recoil from it, wherewith we cannot in the least sympathize. We only wish they could ponder and apply the declaration of Scripture, that “to the pure all things are pure.” There is a certain haleness of moral temperament, which can select, and appropriate, and assimilate, much of what it gathers from all the quarters of human speculation; and thus feeds what it thrives upon. The apostle Paul exemplifies this largeness of survey; and we should say, that, as distinguished from the others—for

their common inspiration did not overbear the natural and complexional differences between them — he was the best qualified, and so the most successful of them all, both for giving forth the deliverances of a strong, healthful, and enlightened mind on those questions of causistry which perplexed and agitated the weaker brethren in the church, and also for holding converse with the *savans* of his day. Such was the habit of the late Dr. Abercrombie; and, from the popularity of his writings, we argue a nearer approximation and better understanding than heretofore, between the scientific and the sacred even in the higher regions of the literary commonwealth.

And, in conclusion, we would tell those of far humbler attainment in learning, that they should make a study of the lessons, here so tastefully and persuasively given, of purity, and kindness, and honour; and that, with the higher aids and expedients which the gospel of Jesus Christ has placed within their reach, they should labour to realize them. This were not a deviation from their holy and heavenward path, but in direct fulfilment of the apostolic injunction — “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

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LECTURES ON ETHICS;

OR, •

MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

LECTURE I.

NATURE OF ETHICS, OR MORAL PHILOSOPHY. — OBLIGATION, VIRTUE, MERIT.—THEY DIFFER ONLY IN THEIR RELATION TO TIME.—WHAT IS AN ACTION, IN MORALS?

THE science of Ethics has relation to our affections of mind, not simply as phenomena, but as virtuous or vicious, right or wrong.

Quid sumus, et quidnam victuri gignimur, ordo
Quis datus, aut metae quam mollis flexus, et unde ;
Quis modus argento, quid fas optare, quid asper
Utile nummus habet : patriae, charisque propinquis
Quantum elargiri deceat : quem te Deus esse
Jussit, et humana qua parte locatus es in re.¹

In the consideration of questions such as these, we feel indeed that philosophy is something more than knowledge,—that it at once instructs and amends us,—blending, as a living and active principle, in our moral constitution, and

¹ Persius, Satira III. 67-72.

purifying our affections and desires, not merely after they have arisen, but in their very source. It is thus, in its relation to our conduct, truly worthy, and worthy in a peculiar sense, of that noble etymology which a Roman philosopher has assigned to it as the most liberal of studies. “*Quare liberalia studia dicta sint vides ; quia homine libero digna sunt. Ceterum unum studium vere liberale est, quod liberum facit : hoc sapientiae, sublime, forte, magnanimum, caetera pusilla et puerilia sunt.*” The knowledge of virtue is indeed that only knowledge which makes man free ; and the philosophy which has this for its object, does not merely teach us what we are to do, but affords us the highest aids and incitements, when the toil of virtue might seem difficult, by pointing out to us, not the glory only, but the charms and tranquil delight of that excellence which is before us, and the horrors of that internal shame which we avoid, by continuing steadily our career. Its office is thus, in a great measure, to be the guardian of our happiness, by guarding that without which there is no happiness,—

Whether, on the rosy mead,
When Summer smiles, to warn the melting heart
Of Luxury’s allurements; whether, firm
Against the torrent, and the stubborn hill,
To urge free Virtue’s steps, and to her side
Summon that strong divinity of soul
Which conquers Chance and Fate; or on the height
The goal assign’d her, haply to proclaim
Her triumph; on her brow to place the crown
Of uncorrupted praise; through future worlds
To follow her interminated way,
And bless Heaven’s image in the heart of man.¹

What, then, is the virtue which it is the practical object of this science to recommend ?

The natural state of man is a state of society.—

¹ Pleasures of Imagination, second form of the poem, Book I. 504-515.

OF OUR NOTIONS OF VIRTUE.

That man, so existing in society, is capable of receiving from others benefit or injury, and, in his turn, of benefiting or injuring them by his actions, is a mere physical fact, as to which there cannot be any dispute.

But though the physical fact of benefit or injury is all which we consider in the action of inanimate things, it is far from being all of which we think in the case of voluntary agents, when there is not merely benefit or injury produced, but a previous intention of producing it. In every case of this kind in which we regard the agent as willing that particular good or evil which he may have produced, there arise certain distinctive emotions of moral approbation or disapprobation. We regard the action in every such case, when the benefit or injury is believed by us to have entered into the intention of him who performed the action, not as advantageous or hurtful only, but as right or wrong ; or, in other words, the person who performed the particular action, seems to us to have moral merit or demerit in that particular action.

To say that any action which we are considering is right or wrong, and to say that the person who performed it has moral merit or demerit, are to say precisely the same thing ; though writers on the theory of morals have endeavoured to make these different questions, and have even multiplied the question still more by other divisions, which seem to me to be only varieties of tautological expression, or at least to be, as we shall find, only the reference to different objects of one simple feeling of the mind.

When certain actions are witnessed by us, or described to us, they excite instantly certain vivid feelings, distinctive to us of the agent, as virtuous or vicious, worthy or unworthy of esteem. His action, we say, is right, himself meritorious. But are these moral estimates of the action and of the agent founded on different feelings ; or do we not mean simply, that he, performing this action, excites in us a feeling of moral approbation or disapprobation, and that all others, in similar circumstances, performing the same

action, that is to say, willing, in relations exactly similar, a similar amount of benefit or injury, for the sake of that very benefit or injury, will excite in us a similar feeling of approbation in the one case, of disapprobation in the other case? The action cannot truly have any quality which the agent has not, because the action is truly nothing, unless as significant of the agent whom we know, or of some other agent whom we imagine. Virtue, as distinct from the virtuous person, is a mere name; as is vice, distinct from the vicious. The action, if it be any thing more than a mere insignificant word, is a certain agent in certain circumstances, willing and producing a certain effect; and the emotion, whatever it may be, excited by the action, is, in truth, and must always be, the emotion excited by an agent real or supposed. We may speak of the fulfilment of duty, virtue, propriety, merit, and we may ascribe these variously to the action, and to him who performed it; but whether we speak of the action or of the agent, we mean nothing more than that a certain feeling of moral approbation has been excited in our mind by the contemplation of a certain intentional production, in certain circumstances, of a certain amount of benefit or injury. When we think within ourselves, Is this what we ought to do? we do not make two inquiries, first, whether the action be right, and then, whether we should not have merit in doing what is wrong, or demerit in doing what is right for us to do; we only consider whether, doing it, we shall excite in others approbation or disapprobation, and in ourselves a corresponding emotion of complacency or remorse. According to the answer which we give to our own heart, in this respect, an answer which relates to the single feeling of moral approbation or disapprobation, we shall conceive that we are doing what we ought to do, or what we ought not to do; and knowing this, we can have no further moral inquiry to make as to the merit or demerit of doing what is previously felt by us to be right or wrong.

Much of the perplexity which has attended inquiries into

the theory of morals, has arisen, I have little doubt, from distinctions which seemed to those who made them to be the result of nice and accurate analysis, but in which the analysis was verbal only, not real, or at least related to the varying circumstances of the action, not to the moral sentiment which the particular action in certain particular circumstances excited. What is it which constitutes an action virtuous? What is it which constitutes the moral obligation to perform certain actions? What is it which constitutes the merit of him who performs certain actions? These have been considered as questions essentially distinct; and because philosophers have been perplexed in attempting to give different answers to all these questions, and have still thought that different answers were necessary, they have wondered at difficulties which themselves created, and struggling to discover what could not be discovered, have often, from this very circumstance, been led into a scepticism which otherwise they might have avoided, or have stated so many unmeaning distinctions as to furnish occasion of ridicule and scepticism to others. One simple proposition has been converted into an endless circle of propositions, each proving and proved by that which precedes or follows it. Why has any one merit in a particular action? Because he has done an action that was virtuous. And why was it virtuous? Because it was an action which it was his duty, in such circumstances, to do. And why was it his duty to do it in such circumstances? Because there was a moral obligation to perform it. And why do we say that there was a moral obligation to perform it? Because if he had not performed it he would have violated his duty, and been unworthy of our approbation. In this circle we might proceed for ever, with the semblance of reasoning, indeed, but only with the semblance; our answers, though verbally different, being merely the same proposition repeated in different forms, and requiring, therefore, in all its forms, to be proved, or not requiring proof in any. To have

merit to be virtuous, to have done our duty, to have acted in conformity with obligation; all have reference to one feeling of the mind, that feeling of approbation which attends the consideration of various actions. They are merely, as I have said, different modes of stating one simple truth; that the contemplation of any one, acting as we have done in a particular case, excites a feeling of moral approval.

To this simple proposition, therefore, we must always come in our moral estimate, whatever divisions or varied references we may afterwards make. Persons acting in a certain manner, excite in us a feeling of approval; persons acting in a manner opposite to this, cannot be considered by us without an emotion perhaps as vivid, or more vivid, but of an opposite kind. The difference of our phraseology, and of our reference to the action or the agent, from which, indeed, that difference of phrase is derived, is founded chiefly on the difference of the time at which we consider the action as meditated, already performed, or in the act of performance. To be virtuous, is to act in this way; to have merit, is to have acted in this way; to feel the moral obligation or duty, is merely to think of the action and its consequences. We imagine in these cases a difference of time, as present, in the virtue of performing it—past, in the merit of having performed it—future, in the obligation to perform it; but we imagine no other difference.

Why does it seem to us virtue to act in this way? Why does he seem to us to have merit, or, in other words, to be worthy of our approbation, who has acted in this way? Why have we a feeling of obligation, or duty, when we think of acting in this way? The only answer which we can give to these questions is the same to all, that it is impossible for us to consider the action, without feeling that, by acting in this way, we should look upon ourselves, and others would look on us, with approving regard; and that if we were to act in a different way, we should look upon ourselves,

and others would look upon us, with abhorrence, or at least with disapprobation. It is indeed easy to go, perhaps, a single step or two back, and to say that we approve of the action as meritorious, because it is an action which tends to the good of the world, or because it is the inferred will of Heaven that we should act in a certain manner; but it is very obvious that an answer of this kind does nothing more than go back a single step or two, where the same questions press with equal force. Why is it virtue, obligation, merit, to do that which is for the good of the world, or which Heaven seems to us to indicate as fit to be done? We have here the same answer, and only the same answer, to give, as in the former case, when we had not gone back this step. It appears to us virtue, obligation, merit, because the very contemplation of the action excites in us a certain feeling of vivid approval. It is this irresistible approvableness, if I may use such a word, to express briefly the relation of certain actions to the emotion that is instantly excited by them, which constitutes to us, who consider the action, the virtue of the action itself, the merit of him who performed it, the moral obligation on him to have performed it. There is one emotion, and it seems to us more than one, only because we make certain abstractions of times and circumstances from the agent himself, and apply every thing which is involved in our present emotion to these abstractions which we have made; to the action, as something distinct from the agent, and involving, therefore, a sort of virtue separate from his personal merit; to his own conception of the action before performing it, as something equally distinct from himself, and involving in it the notion of moral obligation as prior to the action.

If we had not been capable of making such abstractions, the action must have been to us only the agent himself, and the virtue of the action and the virtue of the agent been, therefore, precisely the same. But we are capable of making the abstraction, of considering the good or evil deed,

not as performed by one individual, in certain circumstances peculiar to him, but as performed by various individuals in every possible variety of circumstances. The same action, therefore,—if that can truly be called the same action which is performed, perhaps, with very different views in different circumstances,—is, as we might naturally have supposed, capable of exciting in us different emotions, according to this difference of supposed views, or of the circumstances in which those views are supposed to have been formed. It may excite our approval in one case; or in another case be so indifferent as to excite no emotion whatever; and in another case may excite in us the most vivid disapprobation. The mere fact, however, of this difference of our approbation or disapprobation, when we consider the circumstances in which an action is performed to have been different, is evidently not indicative in itself of any thing arbitrary in the principle of our constitution, on which our emotions of moral approbation or disapprobation depend; by which an action, the same in all its circumstances, is approved by us and condemned; since it is truly not the same action which we are considering, when we thus approve, in one set of circumstances, of an action, of which we perhaps disapprove when we imagine it performed in different circumstances. The action is nothing, but as it is the agent himself, having certain feelings, placed in certain circumstances, producing certain changes. The agent whom we have imagined, when the emotion which we feel is different, is one whom we have supposed to have different views, or to be placed in different circumstances; and though the mere changes, or beneficial or injurious effects produced in both cases, which seem to our eyes to constitute the action, may be the same in both cases, all that is moral in the action, the frame of mind of the agent himself, is as truly different as if the visible action, in the mere changes or effects produced, had itself been absolutely different. The miser, whose sordid parsimony we scorn, exhibits, in his

whole life, at least as much mortification of sensual appetite as the most abstemious hermit, whose voluntary penance we pity and almost respect; the coward, when it is impossible to fly, will often perform actions which would do honour to the most fearless gallantry; the seeming patriot, who, even in the pure ranks of those generous guardians of the public who sincerely defend the freedom and happiness of the land which they love, is a patriot perhaps most unwillingly, because he has no other prospect of sharing that public corruption at which he rails, will still expose the corruption with as much ardour as if he truly thought the preservation of the liberty of his country a more desirable thing than an office in the Treasury; and he who, being already a placeman, has of course a memory and a fancy that suggest to him very different topics of eloquence, will describe the happiness of that land over the interests of which he presides, with nearly the same zeal of oratory, whether he truly at heart take pleasure in the prospect which he pictures, or think the comforts of his own high station by far the most important part of that general happiness which is his favourite and delightful theme. If we were to watch minutely the external actions of a very skilful hypocrite for half a day, it is possible that we might not discover one in which the secret passion within burst through its disguise; yet, if we had reason before to regard him as a hypocrite, the very closeness of the resemblance of his actions, in every external circumstance, to those of virtue, would only excite still more our indignation. They excite these different feelings, however, as I have before said, because the actions in truth are not the same; the action, in its moral aspect, being only the mind impressed with certain views, forming certain preferences, and thus willing and producing certain changes; and the mind, in all the cases of apparent similarity to which I have now alluded, having internal views as different as the external appearances were similar.

Obvious as the remark may seem, that an action cannot be any thing distinct from the agent, more than beauty from some object that is beautiful, and that when we speak of an action, therefore, as virtuous, without regard to the merit of the particular agent, we only conceive some other agent acting in different circumstances, and exciting in us consequently a different feeling of approbation, by the difference of the frame of mind which we suppose ourselves to contemplate; it strangely happens that little attention has been paid to this obvious distinction, that the action has been considered as something separately existing, and that we suppose, accordingly, that two feelings are excited in us immediately by the contemplation of an action; a feeling of right or wrong in the action, and of virtue or vice, merit or demerit, in the agent, which may correspond, indeed, but which may not always be the same; as if the agent could be virtuous, and the action wrong, or the action right, and he not meritorious, but positively guilty. In this way, a sort of confusion and apparent contradiction have seemed to exist in the science of morals, which a clearer view of the agent and the action as one would have prevented, and the apparent confusion and contradiction, where none truly exists, have been supposed to justify in part, or at least have led in some degree to conclusions as false in principle, as dangerous in their practical tendency.

No voluntary act, intentionally productive of benefit or injury, can, as it appears to me, excite directly any such opposite sentiments of right in the action and demerit in the agent, or wrong in the action and merit in the agent. We take into account, in every case, the whole circumstances of the individual; and his action in these circumstances is indifferent to us, or it excites an emotion of approbation or disapprobation more or less vivid. The agent, and the circumstances in which he is placed, the agent, and the changes which he intentionally produces, these are all which truly constitute the action; and the

action, thus compounded of all these circumstances, seems to us right if we approve of it, wrong if the emotion, which constitutes moral disapprobation, arise when we consider it.

We may, however, as in the instances which I have already used, after approving or disapproving a particular action, consider some other individual of different habits and different views, or in circumstances in some other respects different, performing a similar action, that is to say, producing a similar amount of benefit or injury, in the same way as, after having seen a green hill, we can imagine a hill yellow or black exactly of the same figure; and it is as little wonderful, that the new combination of moral circumstances should excite in us a new emotion, as that a yellow or black hill should seem to us less or more beautiful than a green one. Though virtue, as different from the virtuous agent, is a mere abstraction, like greenness, yellowness, blackness, as different from objects that are green, yellow, black, it is still an abstraction which we are capable of making; and, having made it in any particular case, we can conceive multitudes to exist with different views in the situation in which the single individual existed whose action we have considered as virtuous. The action, even though in its effects it may be precisely the same, will then, perhaps, excite in us very different feelings. It may seem to us worthy of blame rather than of praise, or scarcely worthy of praise at all, or worthy of still higher admiration; but the difference arises from the change of circumstances supposed, not from any necessary difference in the principle of our moral judgments. In this way, by imagining some other agent with different views, or in different circumstances, and in this way only, I conceive, we learn to consider actions separately from the particular agent, and to regard the morality of the one as distinct from the merit of the other; when, in truth, the action which we choose to denominate the same, is, as a moral object, completely different.

If we were present when any one, unacquainted with the nature of the different lenses of the optician, looked at any small animal through a magnifier, or a multiplier, in a piece of plane coloured glass, we should never think of blaming his sense of vision as imperfect, though he were seriously to believe that the animal at which he looked was much larger than it is, or was not one merely, but fifty, or was blue, not white. If, however, we were to conceive others, or the same individual himself, to look at the same object without the medium interposed, and to form the same opinion, we should then unquestionably ascribe to their vision what we before ascribed to the mere lens interposed; and, if we conceived our own sight to be perfect, we could not but conceive theirs to be imperfect. It is precisely the same in that distinction of the virtue of an action and the virtue of the agent, which has produced so much confusion in the theory of morals. We conceive, in the one case, the moral vision of the agent with the lens interposed, in the other case without the lens; and we make in the one case an allowance which we cannot make in the other. But still I must repeat, that in making this very allowance, it is only on account of the difference of circumstances that we make it, and that we cannot justly extend the difference from the mere medium to the living principle on which moral vision depends.

When we speak of an action, then, as virtuous, we speak of it as separated from all those accidental intermixtures of circumstances which may cloud the discrimination of an individual; when we speak of a person as virtuous, we speak of him as acting perhaps under the influence of such accidental circumstances; and though his action, considered as an action which might have been performed by any one under the influence of other circumstances, may excite our moral disapprobation in a very high degree, our disapprobation is not extended to him. The emotion which he excites is pity, not any modification of dislike. We wish that he

had been better informed ; and when his general conduct has impressed us favourably, we feel perfect confidence that, in the present instance also, if he had been better informed, he would have acted otherwise.

In reducing all the various conceptions, or at least the conceptions which are supposed to be various, of duty, virtue, obligation, merit, to this one feeling which arises on the contemplation of certain actions ; a feeling which I am obliged to term moral approbation or disapprobation, because there is no other word in use to denote it, though I am aware that approbation and disapprobation, which seem words of judgment rather than of emotion, are not terms sufficiently vivid to suit the force and liveliness of the sentiment which I wish to express ; I flatter myself that I have in some degree freed this most interesting subject from much superfluous argumentation. Why do we consider certain actions as morally right ; certain actions as morally wrong ? why do we consider ourselves as morally bound to perform certain actions, to abstain from certain other actions ? why do we feel moral approbation of those who perform certain actions, moral disapprobation of those who perform certain other actions ? For an answer to all these, I would refer to the simple emotion, as that on which alone the moral distinction is founded. The very conceptions of the rectitude, the obligation, the approvableness, are involved in the feeling of the approbation itself. It is impossible for us to have the feeling, and not to have these ; or, to speak still more precisely, these conceptions are only the feeling itself variously referred in its relation to the person and the circumstance. To know that we should feel ourselves unworthy of self-esteem, and objects rather of self-abhorrence, if we did not act in a certain manner, is to feel the moral obligation to act in a certain manner, as it is to feel the moral rectitude of the action itself. We are so constituted, that it is impossible for us, in certain circumstances, not to have this feeling : and, having the feeling, we must have

the notions of virtue, obligation, merit. It is vain for us to inquire why we are so constituted, as to rejoice at any prosperous event, or to grieve at any calamity ; or why we cannot perceive any change without believing that in future the same antecedent circumstances will be followed by the same consequents. I may remark, too, that, as in the case now mentioned, it is impossible for us to have the belief of the similarity of the future to the past, simple as this belief may seem to be, without having at the same time the conceptions of cause, effect, power ; so, in the case of moral approbation and disapprobation, it is impossible for us to have these feelings, however simple they may at first appear, without the conception of duty, obligation, virtue, merit, which are involved in the distinctive moral feeling, but do not produce it, — as our notions of power, cause, effect, are involved in our belief of the similarity of the future to the past, but are not notions which previously existed, and produced the belief ; or, to speak more accurately, these notions are not involved in the feeling, which is simple, but are rather references made of this one simple feeling to different objects.

When I say, however, that it is vain to inquire why we feel the obligation to perform certain actions, I must be understood as speaking only of inquiries into the nature of the mind itself. Beyond it we may still inquire, and discover what we wish to find, not in our own nature, but in the nature of that Supreme Benevolence which formed us. We do not see, indeed, in the nature of the mind itself, any reason that the present should be considered by us as representative of the future. We know, however, that if man had not been so formed as to believe the future train of physical events to resemble the past, it would have been impossible for him to exist, because he could not have provided what was necessary for preserving his existence, nor avoided the dangers which would then, as now, have hung over him at every step ; and knowing the necessity of this

belief to our very existence, we cannot think of him who formed us to exist, without discovering, in his provident goodness, the reason of the belief itself. But if the existence of man would have been brief and precarious, without this faith in the similarity of the future, it would not have been so wretched as if the mind had not been rendered susceptible of the feelings which we have now been considering, the feelings of approbation and disapprobation, and the notions and affections that originate in these. I shall not attempt to picture to you this wretchedness—the wretchedness of a world in which such feelings were not a part of the mental constitution—a world without virtue, without love of man or love of God; in which, wherever a human being met a human being, he met him as a robber, or a murderer, living only to fear and to destroy, and dying, to leave on the earth a carcass still less loathsome in all its loathsomeness than the living form which had been animated but with guilt. Our only comfort in considering such a dreadful society is, that it could not long subsist, and that the earth must soon have been freed from the misery which disgraced it.

We know, then, in this sense, why our mind has been so constituted as to have these emotions; and our inquiry leads us, as all other inquiries ultimately lead us, to the provident goodness of him by whom we were made. God, the author of all our enjoyments, has willed us to be moral beings; for he could not will us to be happy, in the noblest sense of that term, without rendering us capable of practising and admiring virtue.

LECTURE II.

RECAPITULATION.—APPARENT EXCEPTIONS TO THE DOCTRINES OF THE PRECEDING LECTURE. — SOPHISTRY OF CONTENDING THAT MORAL DISTINCTIONS ARE ACCIDENTAL. — WHEN THE MIND IS INCAPABLE OF PERCEIVING MORAL DISTINCTIONS. — EFFECTS OF PASSION, COMPLEXITY ; AND THE MISLEADING INFLUENCE OF ASSOCIATION.

THE object of my last Lecture was to make you acquainted with the nature and source of our notions of moral excellence and moral delinquency, the primary moral notions to which, as the directors of conduct, every ethical inquiry must relate.

In this elucidation of a subject, the most interesting of all the subjects which can come under our review, since it comprehends all that is admired and loved by us in man, and all that is loved by us and adored in God, I endeavoured to free the inquiry, as much as possible, from every thing which might encumber it, particularly to explain to you the real meaning of some distinctions, which, as commonly misunderstood, have led to much superfluous disputation on the theory of virtue, and partly in consequence of the inconsistencies and confusion which they seem to involve, have had the still more unfortunate effect of leading some minds to disbelief or doubt of the essential distinctions of morality itself.

The most important of these misconceptions relate to our notions of virtue, obligation, merit ; for the origin of which, writers on ethics are accustomed to have recourse to different feelings, and different sources of feeling, but which, I endeavoured to show you, have all their origin in one emotion, or vivid sentiment of the mind, that vivid sentiment which is the immediate result of the contemplation of certain actions, and to which we give the name of moral approbation. An action, though we often speak of it abstractly, is not, and cannot be, any thing which exists independently

of the agent. It is some agent, therefore, real or supposed, whom we contemplate when this sentiment of approbation in any case arises; an agent placed, or imagined to be placed, in certain circumstances, having certain views, willing and producing certain effects of benefit or injury. What the agent is, as an object of our approbation or disapprobation, that his action is; for his action is himself acting. We say, indeed, in some cases, that an action is wrong, without any loss of virtue on the part of the agent in the peculiar circumstances in which he may have been placed; that it is absolutely wrong, relatively right; but in this case the action of which we speak as right and wrong in different circumstances, is truly, as I showed you, in these different circumstances, a different action; that is to say, we consider a different agent, acting with different views; in which case it is as absurd to term the moral action—that which excites our approbation or disapprobation—the same, as it would be to term a virtuous sovereign and his tyrannical successor the same, because they have both been seated on the same throne, and worn the same robes and diadem. One individual putting another individual to death, excites in us abhorrence, if we think of the murderer and the murdered as friends, or even as indifferent strangers. But we say, that the same action of putting to death implies relatively nothing immoral, if the individual slain were a robber entering our dwelling at midnight, or an enemy invading our country. It surely, however, requires no very subtile discernment to perceive, that the murderer of the friend, and the destroyer of the foe, being agents, acting with different views, in different circumstances, their actions, which are only brief expressions of themselves, as acting in different circumstances, are truly different; and, being different, may of course be supposed to excite different feelings in him who considers them, without any anomaly of moral judgment. The same action in its only true sense of sameness, — that is to say, the same frame of mind in circumstances

precisely similar,—cannot then be relatively right and absolutely wrong, as if the moral distinction were loose and arbitrary. If it be relatively right, it is absolutely right ; and what we call the absolute action that is wrong is a different action ; an action as different from that which we term relatively right, as a morass is different from a green meadow, which are both plains ; or a clear rivulet from a muddy canal, which are both streams. We do not say that a morass, though relatively ugly, is, with all its relative ugliness, absolutely beautiful, because it would be beautiful in other circumstances, if drained, and covered with verdure, and blooming with the wild flowers of summer, and still gayer with the happy faces of little groups, that may perhaps be frolicking in delight, where before all was stillness and desolation. Such a meadow is indeed beautiful ; but to our senses, that judge only of what is before them, not of what the immediate object might have been, or might still be in other circumstances, such a meadow is not a morass ; and as little, or rather far less, is the slaughter of half an army of invaders, in one of those awful fields on which the liberty or slavery of a people waits on the triumph of a single hour, to be classed in the same list of actions with the murder of the innocent and the helpless, though with complete similarity of result in the death of others. If the effect alone could be said to constitute the moral action, both terminate equally in the destruction of human life, and both imply the intention of destroying.

An action, then, as capable of being considered by us, is not a thing in itself, which may have various relations to various agents, but is only another name for some agent of whom we think, real or supposed ; and whatever emotion an action excites, is therefore necessarily some feeling for an agent. The virtue of an action is the virtue of the agent,—his merit, his conformity to duty or moral obligation. There is, in short, an approvableness, which is felt on considering certain actions ; and our reference of this

vivid sentiment to the action that excites it, is all which is meant by any of those terms. We are not to make separate inquiries into the nature of that principle of the mind by which we discover the rectitude of an action, and then into the nature of the moral obligation to perform it, and then into the merit of the agent; but we have one feeling excited in us by the agent acting in a certain manner; which is virtue, moral obligation, merit, according as the same action is considered in point of time, when it is the subject, before performance, of deliberation and choice, of actual performance when chosen, or of memory when already performed. It is all which we mean by moral obligation, when we think of the agent as feeling previously to his action, that if he were not to perform the action, he would have to look on himself with disgust, and with the certainty that others would look on him with abhorrence. It is all which we mean by the virtue of the agent, when we consider him acting in conformity with this view. It is merit when we consider him to have acted in this way; the term which we use varying, you perceive, in all these cases, as the action is regarded by us as present, past, or future, and the moral sentiment in all alike, being only that one simple vivid feeling, which rises immediately on the contemplation of the action.

The approvableness of an action, then, to use a barbarous but expressive word, is at once all these qualities; and the approvableness is merely the relation which certain actions bear to certain feelings that arise in our mind on the contemplation of these actions; feelings that arise to our feeble heart with instant warning or direction, as if they were the voice of some guardian power within us, that in the virtues of others points out what is worthy of our imitation, in their vices what we cannot imitate without being unworthy of the glorious endowments of which we are conscious; and unworthy, too, of the love of him who, though known to us by his power, is known to us still more

as the Highest Goodness, and who, in all the infinite gifts which he has lavished on us, has conferred on us no blessing so inestimable as the capacity which we enjoy of knowing and loving what is good. To say that an action excites in us this feeling, and to say that it appears to us right, or virtuous, or conformable to duty, are to say precisely the same thing ; and an action which does not excite in us this feeling, cannot appear to us right, virtuous, conformable to duty, any more than an object can be counted by us brilliant, which uniformly appears to us obscure, or obscure which appears to us uniformly brilliant. To this ultimate fact in the constitution of our nature, the principal, or original tendency of the mind, by which, in certain circumstances, we are susceptible of moral emotions, we must always come in estimating virtue, whatever analysis we may make or may think that we have made. It is in this respect, as in many others, like the kindred emotion of beauty. Our feeling of beauty is not the mere perception of forms and colours, or the discovery of the uses of certain combinations of forms ; it is an emotion arising from these, indeed, but distinct from them. Our feeling of moral excellence, in like manner, is not the mere perception of different actions, or the discovery of the physical good which these may produce ; it is an emotion of a very different kind, a light within our breast, from which, as from the very effulgence of the purest of all truths,

Is human fortune gladden'd with the rays
Of Virtue, with the moral colours thrown
On every walk of this our social scene ;
Adorning for the eye of gods and men
The passions, actions, habitudes of life,
And rendering earth, like heaven, a sacred place,
Where love and praise may take delight to dwell.¹

That we do feel this approbation of certain actions, and disapprobation of certain other actions, no one denies. But

¹ Pleasures of Imagination, second form of the poem, Book II.
151-157.

the feeling is, by many sophistical moralists, ascribed wholly to circumstances that are accidental, without any greater original tendency of the mind to feel, in different circumstances of human action, one or other of these emotions. If man could be born with every faculty in its highest excellence, capable of distinguishing all the remote as well as all the immediate consequences of actions, but free from the prejudices of education, he would, they suppose, look with equal moral love, or rather, with uniform and equal indifference of regard, on him who has plunged a dagger in the breast of his benefactor, and on him who has risked his own life for the preservation of his enemy. There are philosophers, and philosophers too who consider themselves peculiarly worthy of that name, from the nicety of their analysis of all that is complex in action, who can look on the millions of millions of mankind, in every climate and age, mingling together in a society that subsists only by the continued belief of the moral duties of all to all, who can mark every where sacrifices made by the generous, to the happiness of those whom they love, and every where an admiration of such sacrifices,—not the voices of the timid and the ignorant only mingling in the praise, but warriors, statesmen, poets, philosophers, bearing with the peasant and the child their united testimonies to the great truth, that man is virtuous in promoting the happiness of man : there are minds which can see and hear all this, and which can turn away, to seek in some savage island, a few indistinct murmurs that may seem to be discordant with the whole great harmony of mankind !

When an inquirer of this class, after perusing every narrative of every nation in every part of the globe, with a faith for all that is monstrous in morality, as ready as his disbelief of prodigies in physics less marvellous, which the same voyagers and travellers relate, has collected his little stock of facts, or of reports which are to him as facts, he comes forward in the confidence of overthrowing with these

the whole system of public morals, as far as that system is supposed to be founded on any original moral difference of actions. He finds, indeed, every where else parricide looked upon with abhorrence; but he can prove this to be wholly accidental, because he has found, on some dismal coast, some miserable tribe in which it is customary to put the aged to death when very infirm, and in which the son is the person who takes upon him this office. For almost every virtue which the world acknowledges as indicated to us by the very constitution of our social nature, he has, in like manner, some little fact which proves the world to be in an error. Some of these he finds even in the usages of civilized life. What is right on one side of a mountain, is wrong on the opposite side of it; and a river is sometimes the boundary of a virtue as much as of an empire. "How, then, can there be any fixed principles of morality," he says, "when morality itself seems to be incessantly fluctuating?"

Morality is incessantly fluctuating; or rather, according to this system, there is no morality, at least no natural tendency to the distinction of actions as moral or immoral, and we have only a few casual prejudices which we have chosen to call virtues: prejudices which a slight difference of circumstance might have reversed, making the lover of mankind odious to us, and giving all our regard to the robber and the murderer. We prefer, indeed, at present, Aurelius to Caligula; but a single prejudice more or less, or at least a few prejudices additional, might have made Caligula the object of universal love, to which his character is in itself as well entitled as the character of that philosophic emperor, who was as much an honour to philosophy as to the imperial purple. And in what world is this said? In a world in which Caligula has never had a single admirer, in all the multitudes to whom his history has become known: a world in which, if we were to consider the innumerable actions that are performed in it in any one

instant, we should be wearied with counting those which furnish evidence of the truth of moral distinctions, by the complacency of virtue or the remorse of vice, and the general admiration, or disgust and abhorrence, with which the virtue, when known to others, is loved, and the vice detested, long before we should be able to discover a single action that, in the contrariety of general sentiment with respect to it, might furnish even one feeble exception.

Some apparent exceptions, however, it must still be allowed, the moral scene does truly exhibit. But are they, indeed, proofs of the absolute original indifference of all actions to our regard? Or do they not merely seem to be exceptions, because we have not made distinctions and limitations which it was necessary to make?

It often happens that, by contending for too much in a controversy, we fail to establish truths that appear doubtful, only because they are mingled with doubtful or false propositions, for which we contend as strenuously as for the true. This, I think, has taken place, in some degree, in the great controversy as to morals. In our zeal for the absolute immutability of moral distinctions, we have made the argument for original tendencies to moral feeling appear less strong by extending it too far; and facts, therefore, have seemed to be exceptions which could not have seemed to be so, if we had been a little more moderate in our universal affirmation.

Let us consider, then, what the species of accordance is for which we may safely contend.

That virtue is nothing in itself, but is only a general name for certain actions, which agree in exciting, when contemplated, a certain emotion of the mind, I trust I have already sufficiently shown. There is no virtue, no vice, but there are virtuous agents, vicious agents; that is to say, persons whose actions we cannot contemplate without a certain instant emotion; and what we term the law of nature, in its relation to certain actions, is nothing more

than the general agreement of this sentiment in relation to those actions. In thinking of virtue, therefore, it is evident that we are not to look for any thing self-existing, like the universal essences of the schools; and eternal, like the Platonic ideas; but a felt relation, and nothing more. We are to consider only agents, and the emotions which these agents excite; and all which we mean by the moral differences of actions, is their tendency to excite one emotion rather than another.

Virtue, then, being a term expressive only of the relation of certain actions, as contemplated, to certain emotions in the minds of those who contemplate them, cannot, it is evident, have any universality beyond that of the minds in which these emotions arise. We speak always, therefore, relatively to the constitution of our minds, not to what we might have been constituted to admire if we had been created by a different being, but to what we are constituted to admire, and what, in our present circumstances, approving or disapproving with instant love or abhorrence, it is impossible for us not to believe to be, in like manner, the objects of approbation or disapprobation to him who has endowed us with feelings so admirably accordant with all those gracious purposes which we discover in the economy of nature.

Virtue, however, is still, in strictness of philosophic precision, a term expressive only of the relation of certain emotions of our mind to certain actions that are contemplated by us: its universality is co-extensive with the minds in which the emotions arise; and this is all which we can mean by the essential distinctions of morality, even though all mankind were supposed by us, at every moment, to feel precisely the same emotions on contemplating the same actions.

But it must be admitted, also, that all mankind do not feel at every moment precisely the same emotions on contemplating actions that are precisely the same; and it is

necessary, therefore, to make some limitations even of this relative universality.

In the first place, it must be admitted that there are moments in which the mind is wholly incapable of perceiving moral differences; that is to say, in which the emotions that constitute the feeling of these moral differences do not arise. Such are all the moments of very violent passion. When the impetuosity of the passion is abated, indeed, we perceive that we have done what we now look upon with horror; but when our passion was most violent, we were truly blinded by it, or at least saw only what it permitted us to see. The moral emotion has not arisen, because the whole soul was occupied with a different species of feeling. The moral distinctions, however, or general tendencies of actions to excite this emotion, are not on this account less certain; or we must say, that the truths of arithmetic, and all other truths, are uncertain, since the mind, in a state of passion, would be equally incapable of distinguishing these. He who has lived for years in the hope of revenge, and who has at length laid his foe at his feet, may, indeed, while he pulls out his dagger from the heart that is quivering beneath it, be incapable of feeling the crime which he has committed; but would he at that moment be abler to tell the square of four, or the cube of two? All in his mind, at that moment, is one wild state of agitation, which allows nothing to be felt but the agitation itself.

“While the human heart is thus agitated,” it has been said, “by the flux and reflux of a thousand passions, that sometimes unite and sometimes oppose each other, to engrave laws on it, is to engrave them not on sand, but on a wave that is never at rest. What eyes are piercing enough to read the sacred characters?”

“Vain declamation!” answers the writer from whom I quote. “If we do not read the characters, it is not because our sight is too weak to discern them, it is because we do

not fix our eyes on them ; or if they be indistinguishable, it is only for a moment."

"The heart of man," he continues, "may be considered, allegorically, as an island almost level with the water which bathes it. On the pure white marble of the island are engraved the holy precepts of the law of nature. Near these characters is one who bends his eyes respectfully on the inscription, and reads it aloud. He is the lover of Virtue, the Genius of the island. The water around is in continual agitation. The slightest zephyr raises it into billows. It then covers the inscription. We no longer see the characters. We no longer hear the Genius read. But the calm soon rises from the bosom of the storm. The island reappears white as before, and the Genius resumes his employment."

That passion has a momentary influence in blinding us to moral distinctions, or, which is the same thing, an influence to prevent the rise of certain emotions, that, but for the stronger feeling of the passion itself, would arise, may then be admitted ; but the influence is momentary, or little more than momentary, and extends, as we have seen, even to those truths which are commonly considered as best entitled to the appellation of universal. The moral truths, it must be allowed—if I may apply the name of truths to the felt moral differences of actions—are, to the impassioned mind, as little universal as the truths of geometry.

Another still more important limitation of the universality for which we contend, relates to actions which are so complex as to have various opposite results of good and evil, or of which it is not easy to trace the consequences. An action, when it is the object of our moral approbation or disapprobation, is, as I have already said, the agent himself acting with certain views. These views, that is to say, the intentions of the agent, are necessary to be taken into account, or, rather, are the great moral circumstances to be considered ; and the intention is not visible to us like the

external changes produced by it, but is, in many cases, to be inferred from the apparent results. When these results, therefore, are too obscure or too complicated to furnish clear and immediate evidence of the intention, we may pause in estimating actions which we should not fail to have approved instantly, or disapproved instantly, if we had known the intention of the agent, or could have inferred it more easily from a simpler result; or, by fixing our attention chiefly on one part of the complex result, that was perhaps not the part which the agent had in view, we may condemn what was praiseworthy, or applaud what deserved our condemnation. If the same individual may thus have different moral sentiments, according to the different parts of the complex result on which his attention may have been fixed, it is surely not wonderful that different individuals, in regarding the same action, should sometimes approve in like manner, and disapprove variously, not because the principle of moral emotion, as an original tendency of the mind, is absolutely capricious, but because the action considered, though apparently the same, is really different as an object of conception in different minds, according to the parts of the mixed result which attract the chief attention.

Such partial views, it is evident, may become the views of a whole nation, from the peculiar circumstances in which the nation may be placed as to other nations, or from peculiarity of general institutions. The legal permission of theft in Sparta, for example, may seem to us, with our pacific habits, and security of police, an exception to that moral principle of disapprobation for which I contend. But there can be no doubt that theft, as mere theft, — or, in other words, as a mere production of a certain quantity of evil by one individual to another individual, — if it never had been considered in relation to any political object, would in Sparta also have excited disapprobation as with us. As a mode of inuring to habits of vigilance a warlike

people, however, it might be considered in a very different light; the evil of the loss of property, though in itself an evil to the individual, even in a country in which differences of property were so slight, being nothing in this estimate when compared with the more important national accession of military virtue; and, indeed, the reason of the permission seems to be sufficiently marked, in the limitation of the impunity to cases in which the aggressor escaped detection at the time. The law of nature, the law written in the heart of man, then came again into all its authority; or rather, the law of nature had not ceased to have authority, even in those permissions which seemed to be directly opposed to it; the great object, even of those anomalous permissions, being the happiness of the state, the pursuit of which nature points out to our approbation in the same manner, though not with such vivid feelings, as she points out to us for approbation the endeavour to render more happy the individuals around us. It would be a very interesting inquiry to consider, in this way, all those instances which have been adduced as exceptions to natural law, and to detect the circumstances of real or supposed good accompanying the evil permitted, for which the evil itself might in many cases seem to have been permitted; or which, at least, lessened so much the result of evil, in the eyes of those who considered it in the particular circumstances of the age and country, that a very slight temptation might overcome the disapprobation of it, — as we find at present in our civilized society, many evils tolerated, not because they are not considered to be evil, but because the evil seems so slight as not to imply any gross disregard of morality. This minute analysis of the instances alleged, however, though it might not be difficult to discover in every case some form of good, which, in the mixed result of good and evil, was present to the approver's mind, my limits will not allow me to extend; but there is one general remark which may in some measure supply the place of

more minute discussion, since it may almost be said to convert these very instances into proofs of that general accordance of moral sentiment, in disproof of which they are adduced.

When these supposed exceptions are tolerated, why is it that they are tolerated? Is it on account of the benefit or of the injury that co-exist in one complex mixture? Is it said, for example, by the ancient defenders of suicide, that it is to be commended because it deprives mankind of the further aid of one who might still be useful to society, or because it will give sorrow to every relation and friend, or because it is a desertion of the charge which Heaven has assigned to us? It is for reasons very different that it is said by them to be allowable; because the circumstances, they say, are such as seem of themselves to point out that the Divine Being has no longer occasion for our service on earth, and because our longer life would be only still greater grief or disgrace to our friends, and a burden rather than an aid to society. When the usages of a country allow the exposure of infants, is it not still for some reason of advantage to the community, falsely supposed to require it, that the permission is given? Or is it for the mere pleasure of depriving the individual infant of life, and of adding a few more sufferings to the general sufferings of humanity? Where is the land that says, Let misery be produced or increased, because it is misery? Let the production of happiness to an individual be avoided, because it is happiness? Then, indeed, might the distinctions of morality in the emotions which attend the production of good and evil, be allowed to be wholly accidental. But if nature has every where made the production of good desirable for itself, and the production of evil desirable, when it is desired and approved, only because it is accompanied, or supposed to be accompanied, with good, the very desire of the compound of good and evil, on this account, is itself a proof, not of love

of evil, but of love of good. It is pleasing thus to find nature in the wildest excesses of savage ignorance, and in those abuses to which the imperfect knowledge even of civilized nations sometimes gives rise, still vindicating, as it were, her own excellence, — in the midst of vice and misery asserting still those sacred principles which are the virtue and the happiness of nations, — principles of which that very misery and vice attest the power, whether in the errors of multitudes who have sought evil for some supposed good, or in the guilt of individuals, who, in abandoning virtue, still offer to it an allegiance which it is impossible for them to withhold in the homage of their remorse.

It never must be forgotten, in estimating the moral impression which actions produce, that an action is nothing in itself; that all which we truly consider in it is the agent placed in certain circumstances, feeling certain desires, willing certain changes; and that our approbation and disapprobation may therefore vary, without any fickleness on our part, merely in consequence of the different views which we form of the intention of the agent. In every complicated case, therefore, it is so far from wonderful that different individuals should judge differently, that it would indeed be truly wonderful if they should judge alike; since it would imply a far nicer measurement than any of which we are capable, of the mixed good and evil of the complex results of human action, and a power of discerning what is secretly passing in the heart, which man does not possess, and which it is not easy for us to suppose man, in any circumstances, capable of possessing.

In complicated cases, then, we may approve differently, because we are in truth incapable of distinguishing all the moral elements of the action, and may fix our attention on some of these, to the exclusion of others. Our taste, in like manner, distinguishes what is sweet and what is bitter, when these are simply presented to us; and there are

substances which are no sooner put in the little mouth of the infant than he seems to feel from them pleasure or pain. He distinguishes the sweet from the bitter, as he distinguishes them in after life. Who is there who denies that there is, in the original sensibility of the infant, a tendency to certain preferences of this kind ; that there are substances which are naturally agreeable to the taste, substances which are naturally disagreeable, and that it requires no process of education, no labour of years, no addition of prejudice after prejudice, to make sugar an object of desire to the child, and wormwood of disgust ? Yet in the luxury of other years, there are culinary preparations which the taste of some approves, while the taste of others rejects them ; and in all of which it is difficult to distinguish the prevailing element, whether acid, austere, sweet, bitter, aromatic. If the morals of nations differed half as much as the cookery of different nations, we might allow some cause for disbelief of all the natural distinctions of right and wrong. But what sceptic is there who contends, from the approbation which one nation gives to a sauce or a ragout, which almost sickens him, that the sweet does not naturally differ from the bitter, as more agreeable, the aromatic from the insipid ; and that, to the infant, sugar, wormwood, spice, are, as sources of pleasure, essentially the same ?

We approve of what we know, or suppose ourselves to know, and we approve according as we know or suppose, not according to circumstances which truly exist, but which exist unobserved by us and unsuspected. It is not contended that we come into the world with a knowledge of certain actions, which we are afterwards to approve or disapprove, for we enter into the world ignorant of every thing which is to happen in it ; but that we come into existence with certain susceptibilities of emotion, in consequence of which it will be impossible for us, in after life, but for the influence of counteracting circumstances, momentary or permanent, not to be pleased with the con-

temptation of certain actions, as soon as they have become fully known to us, and not to have feelings of disgust on the contemplation of certain other actions. I am astonished, therefore, that Paley, in stating the objection, "that if we be prompted by nature to the approbation of particular actions, we must have received also from nature a distinct conception of the action we are thus prompted to approve, which we certainly have not received," should have stated this as an objection, to which "it is difficult to find an answer," since there is no objection to which the answer is more obvious. There is not a single feeling of the mind, however universal, to the existence of which precisely the same objection might not be opposed. There is no part of the world, for example, in which the proportions of number and quantity are not felt to be the same. Four are to twenty as twenty to a hundred, wherever those numbers are distinctly conceived; but though we come into the world capable of feeling the truth of this proportion, when the numbers themselves shall have been previously conceived by us, no one surely contends that it is necessary, for this capacity, that we should come into the world with an accurate knowledge of the particular numbers. The mind is, by its original constitution, capable of feeling all the sensations of colour, when different varieties of light are presented to the eye; and it has this original constitution, without having the actual sensations which are to arise only in certain circumstances that are necessary for producing them, and which may never, therefore, be states of the mind, if the external organ of vision be imperfect. Even the boldest denier of every original distinction of vice and virtue must still allow, that we do at present look with approbation on certain actions, with disapprobation on other actions; and that, having these feelings, we must, by our original constitution, have been capable of the feelings; so that, if the mere capacity were to imply the existing notions of the actions that are to be approved or disapproved,

he would be obliged, if this objection had any weight, to allow that, on his own principles, we must equally have innate notions of right and wrong, which we have not, or that we feel certain emotions which we yet had no capacity of feeling. But on an objection which appears to me so very obviously futile, it is idle to dwell so long.

We have made, then, two limitations of that universality and absolute uniformity of moral sentiment for which some ethical writers have too strongly contended; in the first place, when the mind is, as it were, completely occupied, or hurried away by the violence of extreme passion; and, in the second place, when the action which we consider is not the simple intentional production of good as good, or of evil as evil, in certain definite circumstances, but when the result that has been willed is a mixture of good and evil, which it is difficult to discriminate, and in which the good may occur to some minds more readily, the evil to other minds; or in different stages of society, or different circumstances of external or internal situation, the good may be more or less important, and the evil more or less important, so as to have a higher relative interest than it otherwise would have possessed.

To these two limitations it is necessary to add a third, that operates very powerfully and widely on our moral estimates,—the influence of the principle of association. We are not to suppose, that because man is formed with the capacity of certain moral emotions, he is therefore to be exempt from the influence of every other principle of his constitution. The influence of association, indeed, does not destroy his moral capacity, but it gives it new objects, or at least varies the objects in which it is to exercise itself, by suggesting with peculiar vividness certain accessory circumstances, which may variously modify the general sentiment that results from the contemplation of particular actions.

One very extensive form of the influence of association

on our moral sentiments, is that which consists in the application to particular cases of feelings that belong to a class. In nature there are no classes : there are only particular actions, more or less beneficial or injurious. But we cannot consider these particular actions long, without discovering in them, as in any other number of objects that may be considered by us at the same time, certain relations of analogy or resemblance of some sort, in consequence of which we class them together, and form for the whole class one comprehensive name. Such are the generic words justice, injustice, malevolence, benevolence. To these generic words, which, if distinguished from the number of separate actions denoted by them, are mere words, invented by ourselves, we gradually, from the influence of association in the feelings that have attended the particular cases to which the same name has been applied, attach one mixed notion, a sort of compound, or modified whole, of the various feelings which the actions separately would have excited,—more vivid, therefore, than what would have arisen on the contemplation of some of these actions,—less vivid than what others might have excited. It is enough that an action is one of a class which we term unjust : we feel instantly not the mere emotion which the action of itself would originally have excited, but we feel also that emotion which has been associated with the class of actions to which the particular action belongs ; and though the action may be of a kind which, if we had formed no general arrangement, would have excited but slight emotion, as implying no very great injury produced or intended, it thus excites a far more vivid feeling, by borrowing, as it were, from other analogous and more atrocious actions, that are comprehended under the same general term, the feeling which they would originally have excited. It is quite evident, for example, that in a civilized country, in which property is largely possessed, and complicated in its tenure, and as in the various modes in which it may be transferred, the

infringement of property must be an object of peculiar importance, and what is commonly termed justice, in regard to it, be a virtue of essential value, and injustice a crime against which it is necessary to prepare many checks, and which is thence regarded as of no slight delinquency. The offence of the transgressor is estimated, in such a case, not by the little evil which, in any particular case, he may intentionally have occasioned to another individual, but in a great degree also by the amount of evil which would arise in a system of society constituted as that of the great nations of Europe is constituted, if all men were to be equally regardless of the right of property in others. When we read, therefore, of the tendency to theft, in many barbarous islanders of whom navigators tell us, and of the very little shame which they seemed to feel on detection of their petty larcenies, we carry along with us our own classes of actions, and the emotions to which our own general rules, resulting from our own complicated social state, have given rise. We forget, that to those who consider an action simply as it is, the guilt of an action is an object that is measured by the mere amount of evil intentionally produced in the particular case ; and that the theft which they contemplate is not, therefore, in its moral aspect, the same offence that is contemplated by us. I need not trace out, in other cases, the influence of general rules, which you must be able to trace with sufficient precision for yourselves.

Such, then, is one of the modes in which association operates. But it is not in general rules alone that the influence of the associating principle is to be traced. It extends in some degree to all our moral feelings. There is no education, indeed, which can make the pure benevolence of others hateful to us, unless by that very feeling of our own inferiority which implies in envy itself our reverence, and consequently our moral approbation, of what we hate ; no education which can make pure deliberate malice in others an object of our esteem. But if there be any

circumstances accompanying the benevolence and malice, which tend to the disparagement of the one and the elevation of the other, the influence of association may be excited powerfully, in this way, by fixing our attention more vividly on these slight accompanying circumstances. The fearlessness which often attends vice, may be raised into an importance beyond its merit, in savage ages, in which fearlessness is more important for the security of the state, and in which power and glory seem to wait on it: the yielding gentleness of benevolence may, in such circumstances, appear timidity, or at least a degree of softness unworthy of the perfect man. In like manner, when a vice is the vice of those whom we love,—of a friend, a brother, a parent,—the influence of association may lessen and overcome our moral disapprobation, not by rendering the vice in itself an object of our esteem, but by rendering it impossible for us to feel a vivid disapprobation of those whom we love, and mingling, therefore, some portion of this very regard in our contemplation of all their actions. It is because we have the virtue of loving our benefactor, or friend, or parent, that we seem not to feel in so a lively a manner the unworthiness of that vice which is partly lost to our notice, in the general emotion of our gratitude. But when we strip away these illusions, or when the vice is pure intentional malice, which no circumstance of association can embellish, it is equally impossible for us to look upon it with esteem, as it is impossible for us to turn away with loathing from him whose whole existence seems to be devoted to the happiness of others, and to rejoice, as we look upon him, that we are not what he is.

*Ite ipsi in vestrae penetralia mentis et intus
Incisos apices, et scripta volumina mentis
Inspicite, et genitam vobiscum agnoscite legem.
Quis vitiis adeo stolidè oblectatur apertis,
Ut quod agit velit ipsi pati? Mendacia fallax,
Furta rapax, furiosum atrox, homicida cruentum
Damnât, et in moechum gladios distringit adulter.*

*Ergo omnes una in vita cum lege creati
Venimus, et fibris gerimus quae condita libris.*

I have made these limitations, because it appears to me that much confusion on the subject of morals has arisen from inattention to these, and from the two great claims which have sometimes been made by the assertors of what they have termed immutable morality. The influence of temporary passion,—of the complication of good with evil, and of evil with good, in one mixed result,—and of general or individual associations, that mingle with these complex results some new elements of remembered pain or pleasure, dislike or regard, it seems to me absurd to attempt to deny. But, admitting these indisputable influences, it seems to me equally unreasonable not to admit the existence of that original susceptibility of moral emotion which precedes the momentary passion, and outlasts it ; which, in admiring the complex result of good and evil, admires always some form of good, and which is itself the source of the chief delights or sorrows which the associations of memory furnish as additional elements in our moral estimate.

LECTURE III.

RETROSPECT OF LAST LECTURE.—THE PRIMARY DISTINCTIONS OF MORALITY IMPLANTED IN EVERY HUMAN HEART, AND NEVER COMPLETELY EFFACED.

HAVING traced in a former Lecture, our notions of virtue, obligation, merit, to one simple feeling of the mind,—a feeling of vivid approval of the frame of mind of the agent, which arises on the contemplation of certain actions, and the capacity of which is as truly essential to our mental constitution, as the capacity of sensation, memory, reason, or of any of the other feelings of which

our mind is susceptible, I considered in my last Lecture, the arguments in opposition to this principle, as an original tendency of the mind, drawn from some apparent irregularities of moral sentiment in different ages and countries.

For determining the force of such instances, however, as objections to the original distinctions of morality, it was necessary to consider precisely what is meant by that general accordance of moral sentiment, which the world may be considered as truly exhibiting. It is only by contending for more than the precise truth, that, in many instances, we furnish its opponents with the little triumphs which seem to them like perfect victory. We give to the truth itself an appearance of doubtfulness, because we have combined it with what is doubtful, or perhaps altogether false.

In the first place, the language which the assertors of virtue are in the habit of employing, when they speak of the eternity and absolute immutability of moral truth, might almost lead to the belief of something self-existing, which could not vary in any circumstances, nor be less powerful at any moment than at any other moment. Virtue, however, it is evident, is nothing in itself, but is only a general name for certain actions, which excite, when contemplated by us, certain emotions. It is a felt relation to certain emotions, and nothing more, with no other universality, therefore, than that of the minds in which, on the contemplation of the same actions, the same emotions arise. We speak always of what our mind is formed to admire or hate, not of what it might have been formed to estimate differently; and the supposed immutability, therefore, has regard only to the existing constitution of things under that Divine Being who has formed our social nature as it is, and who, in thus forming it, may be considered as marking his own approbation of that virtue which we love,

and his own disapprobation of that vice which he has rendered it impossible for us not to view with indignation or disgust.

Such is the moderate sense of the absolute immutability of virtue, for which alone we can contend ; a sense in which virtue itself is supposed to become known to us as an object of our thought, only in consequence of certain emotions which it excites, and with which it is co-extensive and commensurable ; but, even in this moderate sense, it was necessary to make some limitations of the uniformity of sentiment supposed ; since it is abundantly evident, that the same actions, that is to say, the same agents, in the same circumstances, willing and producing the same effects, are not regarded by all mankind with feelings precisely the same, nor even with feelings precisely the same by the same individual in every moment of his life.

The first limitation which I made relates to the moments in which the mind is completely occupied and absorbed in other feelings ; when, for example, it is under the temporary influence of extreme passion, which incapacitates the mind for perceiving moral distinctions as it incapacitates it for perceiving distinctions of every sort. Virtue, though lost to our perception for a moment, however, is immediately perceived again with distinct vision as before, as soon as the agitation subsides. It is like the image of the sky on the bosom of a lake, which vanishes, indeed, while the waters are ruffled, but which reappears more and more distinctly, as every little wave sinks gradually to rest, till the returning calm shows again, in all its purity, the image of that Heaven which has never ceased to shine on it.

The influence of passion, then, powerful as it unquestionably is in obstructing those peculiar emotions in which our moral discernment consists, is limited to the short period during which the passion rages. We are then as little capable of perceiving moral differences, as we should be,

in the same circumstances, of distinguishing the universal truths of geometry ; and in both cases, from the same law of the mind, — that general law, by which one very vivid feeling of any sort lessens in proportion the vividness of any other feeling that may co-exist with it, or, in other cases, prevents the rise of feelings that are not accordant with the prevailing emotion, by inducing, in more ready suggestion, the feelings that are accordant with it.

The next limitation which we made is of more consequence, as being far more extensive, and operating, therefore, in some degree, in almost all the moral estimates which we form. This second limitation relates to cases in which the result of actions is complicated by a mixture of good and evil, and in which we may fix upon the good, when others fix on the evil, and may infer the intention in the agent of producing this good, which is a part of the mixed result, while others may conceive him to have had in view the partial evil. The same actions, therefore, may be approved and disapproved in different ages and countries, from the greater importance attached to the good or to the evil of such compound results, in relation to the general circumstances of society, or the influence perhaps of political errors, as to the consequences of advantage or injury to society of these particular actions ; and, in the same age, and the same country, different individuals may regard the same action with very different moral feelings, from the higher attention paid to certain partial results of it, and the different presumptions thence formed as to the benevolent or injurious intentions of the agent. All this, it is evident, might take place without the slightest mutability of the principle of moral sentiments ; because, though the action which is estimated may seem to be the same in the cases in which it is approved and condemned, it is truly a different action which is so approved and condemned ; a different action in the only sense in which an action has any meaning, as signifying the agent himself having certain views,

and willing, in consequence, certain effects of supposed benefit or injury.

A third limitation, often co-operating with the former, relates to the influence of habit and association in general, whether as extending to particular actions the emotions that have been gradually connected with the whole class of actions under which they have been arranged, or as modifying the sentiments of individuals by circumstances peculiar to the individuals themselves. It is pleasing to love those who are around us ; it is pleasing, above all, to love our immediate friends, and those domestic relations to whom we owe our being, or to whose society, in the first friendships which we were capable of forming, before our heart had ventured from the little world of home into the great world without, we owed the happiness of many years, of which we have forgotten every thing but that they were delightful. It is not merely pleasing to love these first friends ; we feel that it is a duty to love them ; that is to say, we feel that, unless in circumstances of extraordinary profligacy on their part, if we were not to love them, we should look upon ourselves with moral disapprobation. The feeling of this very duty mingles in our estimates of the conduct of those whom we love ; and it is in this way that association in such cases operates ; not by rendering vice in itself less an object of disapprobation than before, but by blending with our disapprobation of the action that love of the agent, which is, as it were, an opposite duty. It is the good which is mixed with the bad that we love, not the bad which is mixed with the good ; and the primary and paramount love of the good and hatred of the bad remain ; though we may seem, in certain cases, to love the one less or more, to hate the other less or more, in consequence of the vivid images which association affords to heighten or reduce the force of the opposite sentiment, when the actions of which we approve or disapprove have a resemblance to the actions of those who have loved or made

us happy; whose love, therefore, and the consequent happiness produced by them, arise, perhaps, to our mind at the very moment at which the similar action is contemplated by us.

These three limitations, then, we must make; limitations, the necessity of which it would have been natural for us to anticipate, though no objections had been urged to the original differences of actions as objects of moral sentiment. But, making these limitations,—to some one or other of which the apparent anomalies may, I conceive, be referred,—do we not leave still unimpaired the great fundamental distinctions of morality itself; the moral approbation of the producer of unmixed good as good, the moral disapprobation of him who produces unmixed evil for the sake of evil? Where moral good and evil mix, the emotions may, indeed, be different; but they are different, not because the production of evil is loved as the mere production of evil, and the production of good hated as the mere production of good; it is only because the evil is tolerated for the good which is loved, and the good, perhaps, in other cases, forgotten or unremarked, in the abhorrence of the evil which accompanies it. When some country is found, in which the intentional producer of pure unmixed misery is preferred on that very account, to the intentional producer of as much good as an individual is capable of producing,—some country, in which it is reckoned more meritorious to hate than to love a benefactor, merely for being a benefactor, and to love rather than to hate the betrayer of his friend, merely for being the betrayer of his friend,—then may the distinctions of morality be said to be as mutable, perhaps, as any other of the caprices of the most capricious fancy. But the denier of moral distinctions knows well, that it is impossible for him to prove the original indifference of actions in this way. He knows that the intentional producer of evil, as pure evil, is always hated, the intentional producer of good, as pure good, always loved; and he flatters himself, that he has succeeded

in proving, by an easier way, that we are naturally indifferent to what the prejudiced term moral good and evil, merely by proving, that we love the good so very much, as to forget, in the contemplation of it, some accompanying evil; and hate the evil so very much, as to forget, in the contemplation of it, some accompanying good.

One of our most popular moralists begins his inquiry into the truth of the natural distinctions of morality, by quoting from Valerius Maximus, an anecdote of most atrocious profligacy, which, he supposes, related to a savage, who had been "cut off in his infancy from all intercourse with his species, and consequently, under no possible influence of example, authority, education, sympathy, or habit; and whose feelings, therefore, in hearing such a relation, if it were possible for us to ascertain what the feelings of such a mind would be, he would consider as decisive of the question." I quote the story as he has translated it.

"The father of Caius Toranius had been proscribed by the Triumvirate. Caius Toranius, coming over to the interests of that party, discovered to the officers who were in pursuit of his father's life, the place where he had concealed himself, and gave them a description by which they might distinguish his person. The old man, more anxious for the safety and fortunes of his son, than about the little that might remain of his own life, began immediately to inquire of the officers who seized him, whether his son was well, whether he had done his duty to the satisfaction of his generals. 'That son,' replied one of the officers, 'that son, so dear to thy affections, betrayed thee to us. By his information thou art apprehended and diest.' The officer, with this, struck a poniard to the old man's heart; and the unhappy parent fell, not so much affected by his fate, as by the means to which he owed it." *Auctore caedis quam ipsa caede miserior.*¹

It is necessary, for the very supposition which is made,

¹ Paley's Moral Philosophy.

that the savage should understand, not merely what is meant by the simple relations of son and father, and all the consequences of the treachery of the son, but that he should know also the additional interest which the paternal and filial relation, in the whole intercourse of good offices from infancy to manhood, receives from this continued intercourse. The author of our mere being is not all which a father in such circumstances is ; he is far better known and loved by us as the author of our happiness in childhood and youth, and the venerable friend of our maturer years. If the savage, knowing this relation in its fullest extent, could yet feel no different emotions of moral regard and dislike, for the son and for the father, it would be easier to suppose, that a life of total privation of society had dulled his natural susceptibilities of emotion, than that he was originally void of these. But what reason is there to imagine, that, with this knowledge, he would not have the emotions which are felt by every human being to whom this story is related ? It is easy to assert, that knowing every relation of a son and father, as well as the consequence of the action, the savage would not feel what every other human being feels, because it is easy to assume, by begging the question, any point of controversy. But where is the proof of the assertion ? We cannot verify the supposition by exact experiment, indeed, for such a savage, so thoroughly exempted from every social prejudice, is not to be found, and could not be made to understand the story even if he were found. But, though we cannot have the perfect experiment, we may yet have an approximation to it. Every infant that is born may be considered very nearly as such a savage ; and as soon as the child is capable of knowing the very meaning of the words, without feeling half the force of the filial relation, he shudders at such a tale, with as lively abhorrence, perhaps, as in other years, when his prejudices and habits, and every thing which is not originally in his constitution, may be said to be matured.

We can imagine vessels sent on voyages of benevolence, to diffuse over the world the blessings of a pure religion, we can imagine voyages of this kind to diffuse the improvements of our sciences and arts. But what should we think of a voyage, of which the sole object was to teach the world that all actions are not, in the moral sense of the term, absolutely indifferent, and that those who intentionally do good to the society to which they belong, or to any individual of that society, ought to be objects of greater regard than he whose life has been occupied in plans to injure the society in general, or at least as many individuals of it as his power could reach? What shore is there at which such a vessel could arrive, however barren the soil, and savage the inhabitants, where these simple doctrines, which it came to diffuse, could be regarded as giving any instruction? The half-naked animal, that has no hut in which to shelter himself, no provision beyond the precarious chase of the day, whose language of numeration does not extend beyond three or four, and who knows God only as something which produces thunder and the whirlwind, even this miserable creature, at least as ignorant as he is helpless, would turn away from his civilized instructors with contempt, as if he had not heard any thing of which he was not equally aware before. The vessel which carried out these simple primary essential truths of morals might return as it went. It could not make a single convert, because there would not have been one who had any doubts to be removed. If, indeed, instead of teaching these truths, the voyagers had endeavoured to teach the natives whom they visited the opposite doctrine, as to the absolute moral indifference of actions, there could then be little doubt that they might have taught something new, whatever doubt there might justly be as to the number of the converts.

When Labienus, after urging to Cato a variety of motives, to induce him to consult the oracle of Ammon, in

the neighbourhood of whose temple the little army had arrived, concludes with urging a motive which he supposed to have peculiar influence on the mind of that great man, that he should at least make use of the opportunity of inquiring of a being who could not err, what it is which constitutes that moral perfection which a good man should have in view for the guidance of his life,

Saltem virtutis amator

Quaere quid est virtus, et posce exemplar honesti,

how sublimely does the answer to this solicitation express the omnipresent divinity of virtue!

Ille Deo plenus, tacita quem mente gerebat,
Effudit dignas adytis e pectore voces.
Quid quaeri, Labiene, jubes? An liber in armis
Occubuisse velim potius, quam regna videre?
An noceat vis ulla bono? Fortunaque perdat
Opposita virtute minas? Laudandaque velle
Sit satis, et nunquam successu crescat honestum?
Scimus, et hoc nobis non altius inseret Ammon.
Haeremus cuncti Superis, temploque tacente,
Nil facimus non sponte Dei; nec vocibus ullis
Numen eget: dixitque semel nascentibus auctor
Quicquid scire licet: steriles nec legit arenas,
Ut caneret paucis, mersitque hoc pulvere verum.¹

“Cast your eyes,” says Rousseau, “over all the nations of the world, and all the histories of nations. Amid so many inhuman and absurd superstitions, amid that prodigious diversity of manners and characters, you will find every where the same principles and distinctions of moral good and evil. The Paganism of the ancient world produced, indeed, abominable gods, who on earth would have been shunned or punished as monsters, and who offered as a picture of supreme happiness, only crimes to commit, and passions to satiate. But Vice, armed with this sacred authority, descended in vain from the eternal abode: she found, in the heart of man, a moral instinct to repel her.

¹ Lucani *Pharsalia*, lib. ix. 563-567, and 569-577.

The continence of Xenocrates was admired by those who celebrated the debaucheries of Jupiter—the chaste Lucretia adored the unchaste Venus—the most intrepid Roman sacrificed to Fear. He invoked the god who dethroned his father, and he died without a murmur by the hand of his own. The most contemptible divinities were served by the greatest men. The holy voice of Nature, stronger than that of the gods, made itself heard, and respected, and obeyed on earth, and seemed to banish, as it were, to the confinement of heaven, guilt and the guilty.”

There is, indeed, to borrow Cicero’s noble description, one true and original law, conformable to reason and to nature, diffused over all, invariable, eternal, which calls to the fulfilment of duty and to abstinence from injustice, and which calls with that irresistible voice which is felt in all its authority wherever it is heard. This law cannot be abolished or curtailed, nor affected in its sanctions by any law of man. A whole senate, a whole people, cannot dispense from its paramount obligation. It requires no commentator to render it distinctly intelligible, nor is it different at Rome, at Athens, now, and in the ages before and after; but in all ages, and in all nations, it is, and has been, and will be, one and everlasting: one as that God, its great author and promulgator, who is the common Sovereign of all mankind, is himself one. Man is truly man, as he yields to this divine influence. He cannot resist it, but by flying as it were from his own bosom, and laying aside the general feelings of humanity; by which very act he must already have inflicted on himself the severest of punishments, even though he were to avoid whatever is usually accounted punishment. “*Est quidem vera lex, recta ratio, naturæ congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quæ vocet ad officium jubendo, vetando a fraude deterreat; quæ tamen neque probos frustra jubet aut vetat, nec improbos jubendo aut vetando movet. Huic legi nec obrogari fas est, neque derogari ex hac aliquid licet, neque*

tota abrogari potest. Nec vero, aut per senatum aut per populum solvi hac lege possumus. Neque est quærendus explanator aut interpret ejus alius. Nec erit alia lex Romæ, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac; sed et omnes gentes, et omni tempore, una lex et sempiterna et immortalis continebit; unusque erit communis quasi magister, et Imperator omnium Deus ille, legis hujus inventor, disceptator, lator; cui qui non parebit, ipse se fugiet, ac naturam hominis aspernabitur, atque hoc ipso luet maximas pœnas, etiam si cætera supplicia quæ putantur effugerit."

I have already, in a former Lecture, alluded to the strength of the evidence which is borne by the guilty, to the truth of those distinctions which they have dared to disregard. If there be any one who has an interest in gathering every argument which even sophistry can suggest, to prove that virtue is nothing, and vice therefore nothing, and who will strive to yield himself readily to this consolatory persuasion, it is surely the criminal who trembles beneath a weight of memory which he cannot shake off. Yet even he who feels the power of virtue only in the torture which it inflicts, does still feel this power, and feels it with at least as strong conviction of its reality, as those to whom it is every moment diffusing pleasure, and who might be considered perhaps as not very rigid questioners of an illusion which they felt to be delightful. The spectral forms of superstition have indeed vanished; but there is one spectre which will continue to haunt the mind, as long as the mind itself is capable of guilt, and has exerted this dreadful capacity—the spectre of a guilty life, which does not haunt only the darkness of a few hours of night, but comes in fearful visitation, whenever the mind has no other object before it that can engage every thought, in the most splendid scenes and in the brightest hours of day. What enchanter is there who can come to the relief of a sufferer of this class, and put the terrifying spectre to

flight? We may say to the murderer, that, in poisoning his friend, to succeed a little sooner to the estate which he knew that his friendship had bequeathed to him, he had done a deed as meritorious in itself, as if he had saved the life of his friend at the risk of his own; and that all for which there was any reason to upbraid himself was, that he had suffered his benefactor to remain so many years in the possession of means of enjoyment, which a few grains of opium or arsenic might have transferred sooner to him. We may strive to make him laugh at the absurdity of the scene, when, on the very bed of death, that hand which had often pressed his with kindness before, seemed to press again with delight the very hand which had mixed and presented the potion. But though we may smile, if we can smile, at such a scene as this, and point out the incongruity with as much ingenious pleasantry as if we were describing some ludicrous mistake, there will be no laughter on that face from which we strive to force a smile. He who felt the grasp of that hand will feel it still, and will shudder at our description; and shudder still more at the tone of jocular merriment with which we describe what is to him so dreadful.

What, then, is that theory of the moral indifference of actions which is evidently so powerless, of which even he who professes to regard it as sound philosophy, feels the impotence as much as other men; when he loves the virtuous and hates the guilty, when he looks back with pleasure on some generous action, or with shame and horror on actions of a different kind, which his own sound philosophy would teach him to be, in every thing that relates to his own internal feelings, exclusively of the errors and prejudices of education, equal and indifferent? It is vain to say, as if to weaken the force of this argument, that the same self-approving complacency, and the same remorse, are felt for actions which are absolutely insignificant in themselves, for regular observance or neglect of the most frivolous rites of superstition. There can be no

question that self-complacency and remorse are felt in such cases. But it surely requires little philosophy to perceive, that, though a mere ceremony of devotion may be truly insignificant in itself, it is far from insignificant when considered as the command of Him to whose goodness we owe every thing which we value as great, and to disobey whose command, therefore, whatever the command may be, never can be a slight offence. To consider the ceremonial rite alone, without regard to him who is believed to have enjoined it, is an error as gross as it would be to read the statutes of some great people, and paying no attention to the legislative power which enacted them; to laugh, perhaps, at the folly of those who thought it necessary to conform their conduct to a law, which was nothing but a series of alphabetic characters on a scrap of paper or parchment, that in a single moment could be torn to pieces or burnt.

Why do we smile on reading, in the list of the works of the hero of a celebrated philosophic romance, that one of these was "a complete digest of the law of nature, with a review of those 'laws' that are obsolete or repealed, and of those that are ready to be renewed, and put in force?" We feel that the laws of nature are laws which no lapse of ages can render obsolete, because they are every moment operating in every heart; and which, for the same reason, never can be repealed, till man shall have ceased to be man.

After these remarks on the general theory of the original moral indifference of actions, which considers all morality as adventitious without any original tendencies in the mind that could of themselves lead it to approve or disapprove, it may be necessary still to take some notice of that peculiar modification of the theory, which denies all original obligation of justice, but asserts the authority of political enactment, not as attaching merely rewards to certain actions, and punishments to certain other actions,

but as producing the very notions of just and unjust, with all the kindred notions involved in them, and consequently a right, which it would be immorality as well as imprudence to attempt to violate.

Of this doctrine, which is to be traced in some writers of antiquity, but which is better known as the doctrine of Hobbes, who stated it with all the force which his acuteness could give it,—a doctrine to which he was led in some measure perhaps by a horror of the civil dissensions of the period in which he wrote, and by a wish to lessen the inquisitorial and domineering influence of the priesthood of that fanatical age, by rendering even religion itself subject to the decision of the civil power;—the confutation is surely sufficiently obvious. A law, if there be no moral obligation, independent of the law, and prior to it, is only the expression of the desire of a multitude, who have power to punish, that is to say, to inflict evil of some kind on those who resist them; it may be imprudent, therefore, to resist them; that is to say, imprudent to run the risk of that precise quantity of physical suffering which is threatened; but it can be nothing more. If there be no essential morality that is independent of law, an action does not acquire any new qualities by being the desire of one thousand persons rather than of one. There may be more danger, indeed, in disobeying one thousand than in disobeying one, but not more guilt. To use Dr. Cudworth's argument, it must either be right to obey the law, and wrong to disobey it, or indifferent whether we obey it or not. If it be morally indifferent whether we obey it or not, the law, which may or may not be obeyed, with equal virtue, cannot be a source of virtue; and if it be right to obey it, the very supposition that it is right to obey it, implies a notion of right and wrong that is antecedent to the law, and gives it its moral efficacy. But, without reasoning so abstractly, are there, indeed, no differences of feeling in the breast of him who has violated a law, the essential

equity of which he feels, and of him whom the accumulated and ever-increasing wrongs of a whole nation have driven to resist a force which, however long it may have been established, he feels to be usurpation and iniquity ; — who, with the hope of giving freedom to millions has lifted against a tyrant, though armed with all the legal terrors, and therefore with all the morality and virtue of despotism, that sword, around which other swords are soon to gather, in hands as firm, and which, in the arm of him who lifts it, is almost like the standard of liberty herself? Why does the slave, who is led to the field, in which he is to combat for his chains against those who would release him and avenge his wrongs, feel himself disgraced by obedience, when to obey implicitly, whatever the power may be which he obeys, is the very perfection of heroic virtue? and when he looks on the glorious rebel, as he comes forward with his fearless band, why is it that he looks, not with indignation, but with an awful respect; and that he feels his arm weaker in the fight, by the comparison of what he morally is, and of what those are whom he servilely opposes?

“A sovereign,” it has been truly said, “may enact and rescind laws, but he cannot create or annihilate a single virtue.” It might be amusing to consider, not one sovereign only, but all the sovereigns of the different nations of the earth, endeavouring by law to change a virtue into a vice,—a vice into a virtue. If an imperial enactment of a senate of kings were to declare, that it was in future to be a crime for a mother to love her child, — for a child to venerate his parent,—if high privileges were to be attached to the most ungrateful, and an act of gratitude to a benefactor declared to be a capital offence,—would the heart of man obey this impotent legislation? Would remorse and self-approbation vary with the command of man, or of any number of men? and would he who, notwithstanding these laws, had obstinately persisted in the illegality of loving his parent or his benefactor, tremble to meet his own con-

science with the horror which the parricide feels? There is, indeed, a power by which "princes decree justice;" but it is a power above the mere voice of kings, — a power which has previously fixed in the breasts of those who receive the decree, a love of the very virtue which kings, even when kings are most virtuous, can only enforce. And it is well for man, that the feeble authorities of this earth cannot change the sentiments of our hearts with the same facility as they can throw fetters on our hands. There would then, indeed, be no hope to the oppressed. The greater the oppression the stronger motive would there be to make obedience to oppression a virtue, and every species of guilt which the powerful might love to exercise, amiable in the eyes even of the miserable victims. All virtue, in such circumstances, would soon perish from the earth. A single tyrant would be sufficient to destroy, what all the tyrants that have ever disgraced this moral scene have been incapable of extinguishing, — the remorse which was felt in the bosom of him who could order every thing but vice and virtue, — and the scorn, and the sorrow, and the wrath of every noble heart, in the very contemplation of his guilty power.

Nature has not thrown us upon the world with such feeble principles as these. She has given us virtues of which no power can deprive us, and has fixed in the soul of him whom more than fifty nations obey, a restraint on his power, from which the servile obedience of all the nations of the globe could not absolve him. There may be flatterers to surround a tyrant's throne, with knees ever ready to bow on the very blood with which its steps are stained, and with voices ever ready to applaud the guilt that has been already perpetrated, and to praise, even with a sort of prophetic quickness of discernment, the cruelties in prospect which they only anticipate. There may be servile warriors, to whom it is indifferent whether they succour or oppress, whether they enslave or free, if they

have only drowned in blood, with sufficient promptness, the thousands of human beings whom they have been commanded to sweep from the earth. There may be statesmen as servile, to whom the people are nothing, and to whom every thing is dear, but liberty and virtue. These eager emulators of each other's baseness may sound for ever in the ears of him on whose vices their own power depends, that what he has willed must be right, because he has willed it; and priests still more base, from the very dignity of that station which they dishonour, not content with proclaiming that crimes are right, may add their consecrating voice, and proclaim that they are holy, because they are the deeds of a vicegerent of that Holiness which is supreme. But the flatteries which only sound in the ear, or play, perhaps, with feeble comfort around the surface of the heart, are unable to reach that deeper-seated sense of guilt which is within.

In subjecting, for the evident good of all, whole multitudes to the sway of a few, or of one, Nature then, as we have seen, has thrown over them a shelter, which power may, indeed, violate, but which it cannot violate with impunity; since, even when it is free from every other punishment, it is forced, however reluctantly, to become the punisher of itself. This shelter, under which alone human weakness is safe, and which does not give protection only, but happiness, is the shelter of virtue, the shelter of moral love and hate, of moral pity and indignation, of moral joy and remorse. Life, indeed, and many of the enjoyments which render social life delightful, may, at least on a great part of the surface of the earth, be at the mercy of a power that may seem to attack, or forbear, with no restraint but the caprice of its own will. Yet, before even these can be assailed, there is a voice which warns to desist, and a still more awful voice of condemnation, when the warning has been disregarded. For our best enjoyments, our remembrances of virtue, and our wishes of

virtue, we are not dependent on the mercy, nor even on the restraints of power. Nature has provided for them with all her care, by placing them where no force can reach. In freedom, or under tyranny, they alike are safe from aggression; because, wherever the arm can find its way, there is still conscience beyond. The blow which reaches the heart itself, cannot tear from the heart what, in life, has been happiness or consolation, and what, in death, is a happiness that needs not to be comforted.

Our own felicity is then, truly, in no slight degree, as Goldsmith says, consigned to ourselves, amidst all the varieties of social institutions.

In every government, though terrors reign,
 Though tyrant kings, or tyrant laws restrain,
 How small, of all that human hearts endure,
 That part which laws or kings can cause or cure !
 Still to ourselves, in every place, consign'd,
 Our own felicity we make or find.
 With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,
 Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.
 The lifted axe, the agonizing wheel,
 Luke's iron crown, and Damien's bed of steel,
 To men remote from power but rarely known,
 Leave reason, faith, and conscience all our own.¹

"So far," says Cicero, "is virtue from depending on the enactment of kings, that it is as ancient as the system of nature itself, or as the great Being by whom nature was formed." "*Vis ad recte facta vocandi et a peccatis avocandi, non modo senior est, quam aetas populorum et civitatum, sed aequalis illius coelum atque terras tuentis et regentis Dei:—Nec si, regnante Tarquinio, nulla erat Romae scripta lex de stupris, ideo non contra illam legem sempiternam, Sextus Tarquinius vim Lucretiae attulit. Erat enim ratio profecta a rerum natura, et ad rectè faciendum impellens et a dilicto avocans, quae non*

¹ Concluding verses of "The Traveller."

tum denique incipit lex esse cum scripta est, sed tum cum orta est; orta autem simul est cum mente divina.”¹ The law, on which right and wrong depend, did not begin to be law when it was written: it is older than the ages of nations and cities, and contemporary with the very eternity of God.

LECTURE IV.

OF THE SYSTEM OF MANDEVILLE. — OF THE INFLUENCE OF REASON ON OUR MORAL SENTIMENTS. — OF THE SYSTEMS OF CLARKE AND WOLLASTON.

IN the inquiries which have last engaged us, we have seen what that susceptibility of moral emotion is, to which we owe our notions of virtue and vice, in all their relative variety of aspects: we have seen in what sense it is to be understood as an original principle of our common nature, and what limitations it is necessary to give to its absolute universality. There is a sophistry, however, the errors of which it was necessary to state to you, that confounds, in these limitations, the primary distinctions themselves; and supposes that it has shown the whole system of morals to be founded on accidental prejudices, when, in opposition to the millions of millions of cases, that obviously confirm the truth of an original tendency to certain moral preferences, it has been able to exhibit a few facts which it professes to regard as anomalous. The fallacy of this objection I endeavoured, accordingly, to prove to you, by showing that the supposed anomalies arise, not from defect of original moral tendencies, but from the operation of other principles which are essential parts of our mental constitution, like

¹ De Legibus, lib. ii. c. 4, of Gruter's notation, or c. 8, 9, 10, of the common notation, with some alterations and omissions.

our susceptibility of moral emotion ; which are not, however, more essential parts of it than that moral susceptibility itself, and which, even in modifying our sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, produce this effect, not by altering the principle which approves and disapproves, but the objects which we contemplate when these emotions arise. In the conclusion of my lecture,*I examined the kindred sophistry of those political moralists, who, considering right and wrong as of human institution, in their denial of every primary distinction of morals, found a sort of artificial virtue on obedience to the civil power ; forgetting that their very assertion of the duty of obedience, supposes a feeling of duty antecedent to the law itself ; and that there are principles of equity, according to which even positive laws are judged, and, though approved in many cases, in many cases also condemned, by the moral voice within the breast, as inconsistent with that feeling of justice which is prior and paramount to the law itself.

In some measure akin to the theory of these political moralists, since it ascribes morality, in like manner, to human contrivance, is the system of Mandeville, who considers the general praise of virtue to be a mere artifice of political skill ; and what the world consents to praise as virtue in the individual, to be a mere imposition on the part of the virtuous man. Human life, in short, according to him, is a constant intercourse of hypocrisy with hypocrisy ; in which, by an involuntary self-denial, present enjoyment of some kind or other is sacrificed for the pleasure of that praise which society, as cunning as the individual self-denier, is ready, indeed, to give, but gives only in return for sacrifices that are made to its advantage. His system, to describe it a little more fully, as stated in the inquiry into the origin of moral virtue, prefixed to his remarks on his own Fable of the Bees, is simply this,—that man, like all other animals, is naturally solicitous only of his personal

gratification, without regard to the happiness or misery of others ; that the great point, with the original lawgivers or tamers of these human animals, was to obtain from them the sacrifice of individual gratification, for the greater happiness of others ; that this sacrifice, however, could not be expected from creatures that cared only for themselves, unless a full equivalent were offered for the enjoyment sacrificed ; that as this, at least in the greater number of cases, could not be found in objects of sensual gratification, or in the means of obtaining sensual gratification which are given in exchange in common purchases, it was necessary to have recourse to some other appetite of man ; that the natural appetite of man for praise readily presented itself, for this useful end, and that, by flattering him into the belief that he would be counted nobler for the sacrifices which he might make, he was led, accordingly, to purchase this praise by a fair barter of that, which, though he valued it much, and would not have parted with it but for some equivalent or greater gain, he still valued less than the praise which he was to acquire ; that the moral virtues, therefore, to use his strong expression, are "the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride;" and that, when we think that we see virtue, we see only the indulgence of some frailty, or the expectation of some praise.

Such is the very licentious system as to moral virtue, of this satirist of man ; whose doctrine, false as it is, as a general view of human nature, has, in the world, so many instances which seem to correspond with it, that a superficial observer, who is little accustomed to make distinctions, extends readily to all mankind, what is true only of a part, and because some who wish to appear virtuous are hypocrites, conceives that all virtue is hypocrisy ; in the same way as such a superficial thinker would have admitted any other error, stated in language as strong, and with images and pictures as vivid.

It would be idle to repeat, in particular application to

this system, the general remarks which I made in my former lectures, on the early appearances of moral emotion, as marking an original distinction of actions, that excite in us moral approbation, from those which do not excite it, and which excite the opposite feeling of moral disapprobation. I shall not even appeal to the conscience of him who has had the happiness of performing a generous action, without the slightest regard to the praise of man, which was, perhaps, not an object even of conception at all, and certainly not till the action itself was performed. But we may surely ask, in this case, as much as in any mere physical hypothesis, by what authority so extensive a generalization is made from so small a number of particular cases? If, indeed, we previously take for granted that all virtue is hypocrisy, every case of virtue which we perceive seeming to us a case of hypocrisy, may be regarded only as an illustration of the doctrine, to the universal truth of which we have already given our assent. But if we consent to form our general conclusion before examination, and then to adapt our particular conclusions to the previous general belief, this sort of authority may be found, for the wildest hypothesis, in physics, as much as for that moral hypothesis, the licentiousness of which is founded on the same false logic. We have only to take the hypothesis, however wild, for granted; and then the facts will be, or will be considered to be, illustrations of it. The question is not, whether, on the supposition of universal hypocrisy, all seeming virtue be imposition, for in that case there could be no doubt; but whether all virtue be hypocrisy; and for this, it is surely necessary to have some stronger proof than the mere fact that some men are hypocrites; or even the very probable inference, that there is a great deal of hypocrisy (as there is a great deal of virtuous benevolence or self-command) which we are not capable of discovering, and to which, accordingly, we may erroneously have given the praise of virtue. The love of praise may be

a universal principle ; but it is not more truly universal than the feeling of right and wrong, in some one or other of their forms ; and of two feelings, equally universal, it is as absurd to deny the reality of one, as the reality of the other. All actions have not one object. Some are the result of a selfish love of praise ; some of a generous love of virtue, that is to say, of love of those whose happiness virtue can promote. The secret motives of mankind, indeed, in this variety of possible objects, cannot be known ; and the paradox of Dr. Mandeville, therefore, has this advantage, that it is impossible to say, in any case of virtue, " Here is virtue that has no regard to praise," since he has still the power of answering, that there may be a desire of praise, though it is not visible to us. But, to reasoning of this sort there is no limit. If we be fond of paradoxes, it is easy to assert that there is no such state as that of health, and to prove it in exactly the same manner, by showing, that many who seem blooming and vigorous are the victims of some inward malady ; and that it is, therefore, impossible for us, in pointing out any one, to say, there is health in this young and active frame ; since the bloom which we admire may be only the covering of a disease that is soon to prey on the very beauty which it seemed, perhaps for the time, to heighten with additional loveliness. If it be easy to make a little system like that of Mandeville, which reduces all virtue to the love of praise, it is just as easy to reverse the system, and to make all love of praise a modification of the purest virtue. We love it, it may be said, merely that we may give delight to those who love us, and who feel a lively interest in all the honours which can be lavished on us. This theory may be false, or rather truly is so ; but however false, or even absurd, it is as philosophic in every respect as the opposite theory of Mandeville, since it proceeds, exactly in the same way, on the exclusive consideration of a certain elementary part of our mixed nature, and extends universally what is only

partially true. Indeed, the facts which support it, if every one were to consult his memory, in the earliest years to which he can look back on his original feelings, are stronger, in support of this false generous hypothesis, than of that false ungenerous hypothesis, to which I have opposed it. What delight did the child feel, in all his little triumphs, when he thought of the pleasure which his parents were to feel ! When his lesson was well learned, and rewarded with its due commendation, there were other ears than those around, which he would have wished to have heard ; and if any little prize was allotted as a memorial of excellence, the pleasure which he felt on receiving it was slight, compared with the pleasure with which he afterwards saw it in other hands, and looked to other eyes, when he returned to his home. Such, it might be said, is the origin of that love of praise which we feel ; and its growth in the progress of life, when praise is sought in greater objects, is only the growth of the same generous passion. But I will not dwell longer on an hypothesis which I have stated as false, and obviously false, though, obviously false as it is, it is, at least, as well founded as that of Mandeville. My only object is, to show you, by this complete reversal of his reasoning, with equal semblance of probability, that his hypothesis is but an hypothesis.

But how comes it in this system, which must account for our own emotions, as well as for the emotions of others, that we do approve of certain actions, as virtuous, without valuing them for the mere love of praise, and condemn even the love of praise itself, when the good of the world is intentionally sacrificed to it ? I will admit, for a moment, to Mandeville, that we are all hypocrites ; that we know the game of human life, and play our parts in it accordingly. In such circumstances, we may indeed assume the appearance of virtue ourselves ; but how is it, that we feel approbation of others assuming the same disguise, when we are aware of its nature, and know virtue in all the actions

which go under that well-sounding name, to be only a more or less skilful attempt at imposition? The mob in the gallery may, indeed, wonder at all the transmutations in the pantomime, and the silliest among them may believe that harlequin has turned the clown into a fruit-stand, and himself into a fruit-woman: but, however wide the wonder, or the belief may be, he who invented these very changes, or is merely one of the subordinate shifters of the scenery, cannot surely be a partaker of the illusion. What juggler ever deceived his own eyes? Katerfelto, indeed, is described by Cowper, as "with his hair on end, at his own wonders wondering." But Katerfelto himself, who "wondered for his bread," could not feel much astonishment, even when he was fairly giving the greatest astonishment to others. It must be the same with the moral juggler. He knows the cheat; and he cannot feel admiration. If he can truly feel esteem, he feels that love of virtue, and consequently that distinction of actions, as virtuous or worthy of moral approbation, which Mandeville denies. He may be a dupe, indeed, in the particular case, but he cannot even be a dupe, without believing that virtue is something nobler than a fraud; and, if he believe virtue to be more noble, he must have feelings nobler than any which the system of Mandeville allows. In believing that it is possible for man not to be a hypocrite, he may be considered almost as proving, that he has not, uniformly, been a hypocrite himself.

Even if the belief of a system of this sort, which, as we have seen, has no force but that which it derives from the very common paralogism of asserting the universal truth of a partial conclusion; even if this miserable belief were to have no tendency directly injurious to the morals of those who admit it, the mere loss of happiness which it would occasion, by the constant feeling of distrust to which it must give rise, would of itself be no slight evil. To regard even every stranger, on whom our eyes could fall, as

engaged in one unremitting plan of deceit, all deceiving, and all to a certain degree deceived, would be to look on society with feelings that would make absolute solitude comparatively pleasing ; and, if to regard strangers in this light would be so dreadful, how far more dreadful would it be, to look, with the same distrust, on those in whom we had been accustomed to confide as friends—to see dissimulation in every eye—in the look of fondness of the parent, the wife, the child, the very caress and seeming innocence of infancy ; and to think, that, the softer every tone of affection was to our ear, the more profound was the falsehood, which had made it softer, only that it might the more surely deceive ! It is gratifying to find, that a system, which would make this dreadful transformation of the whole moral world, is but an hypothesis ; and an hypothesis so unwarrantable, because so inconsistent with every feeling of our heart. Yet it is unfortunately a paradox, which admits of much satirical picturing ; and while few pause sufficiently to discover its logical imperfections, it is very possible that some minds may be seduced by the mere lively colouring of the pictures, to suppose, in spite of all the better feelings of which they are conscious, that the representation which is given of human life is true, because a few characters in human life are truly drawn. A rash assent may be given to the seeming penetration which such a view of the supposed artifices of morality involves ; and after assent is once rashly given, the very generosity that might have appeared to confute the system, will be regarded only as an exemplification of it. I feel it the more my duty, therefore, to warn you against the adoption of a system, so false to the excellence of our moral nature ; not because it is false only, though, even from the grossness of its theoretic falsehood alone, it is unworthy of a single moment's philosophic assent, but still more, because the adoption of it must poison the virtue, and the happiness still more than the virtue, of every mind which admits it.

There is scarcely any action for which it is not possible to invent some unworthy motive. If our system requires the invention of one, the invention, we may be sure, will very speedily take place; and with the loss of that amiable confidence of virtue, which believed and was believed, how much of happiness, too, will be lost, or rather, how little happiness will afterwards remain!

A slight extension of the system of Mandeville produces that general selfish system of morals which reduces all virtue to the desire of the individual good of the agent. On this it will be necessary to dwell a little more fully, not so much for the purpose of exposing the fallacy of the system itself, important as this exposure is, as for explaining that relation of utility to virtue, of which we so frequently hear, without any very accurate meaning attached to the relation.

In the first place, however, since actions can be estimated as more or less useful, only by that faculty which analyzes and compares, it will be of advantage to make some remarks on the influence of reason on our moral sentiments, and on those theories which, proceeding beyond this indisputable influence, would reduce to mere reason, as if it were the great principle of virtue itself, the whole moral phenomena of our approbation of good and disapprobation of evil.

If all the actions of which man is capable, had terminated in one simple result of good or evil, without any mixture of both, or any further consequences, reason, I conceive, would have been of no advantage whatever, in determining moral sentiments that must, in that case, have arisen immediately on the consideration of the simple effect, and of the will of producing that simple effect. Of the intentional production of good, as good, we should have approved instantly; of the intentional production of evil, as evil, we should as instantly have disapproved; and reason could not, in such circumstances, have taught us to love the one more, or hate the other less; certainly not to love what we

should otherwise have hated, nor to hate what we should otherwise have loved. But actions have not one simple result, in most cases. In producing enjoyment to some, they may produce misery to others, either by consequences that are less or more remote, or by their own immediate but compound operation. It is impossible, therefore, to discover instantly, or certainly, in any particular case, the intention of the agent, from the apparent result; and impossible for ourselves to know, instantly, when we wish to perform a particular action, for a particular end, whether it may not produce more evil than good, when the good was our only object,—or more good than evil, when our object was the evil only. Reason, therefore, that power by which we discover the various relations of things, comes to our aid, and pointing out to us all the probable physical consequences of actions, shows us the good of what we might have conceived to be evil, the evil of what we might have conceived to be good, weighing each with each, and calculating the preponderance of either. It thus influences our moral feelings indirectly; but it influences them only by presenting to us new objects, to be admired or hated, and still addresses itself to a principle which admires or hates. Like a telescope, or microscope, it shows us what was too distant, or too minute, to come within the sphere of our simple vision; but it does not alter the nature of vision itself. The best telescope, or the best microscope, could give no aid to the blind. They imply the previous power of visual discernment, or they are absolutely useless. Reason, in like manner, supposes in us a discriminating vision of another kind. By pointing out to us innumerable advantages or disadvantages, that flow from an action, it may heighten or reduce our approbation of the action, and consequently our estimate of the virtue of him whom we suppose to have had this whole amount of good or evil in view, in his intentional production of it; but it does this only because we are capable of feeling

moral regard for the intentional producer of happiness to others, independently of any analyses which reason may make. If we did not love what is for the good of mankind, and love, consequently, those actions which tend to the good of mankind, it would be vain for reason to show, that an action was likely to produce good, of which we were not aware, or evil of which we were not aware. It is very different, however, when we consider the mind as previously susceptible of moral emotion. If our emotion of approbation, when we meditate on the propriety of a particular action, depend, in any degree, on our belief of resulting good, and our disapprobation, in any degree, on our belief of resulting evil; to show that the good of which we think is slight, when compared with the evil which accompanies or follows it, is, perhaps, to change wholly our approbation into disapprobation. We should feel, in such circumstances, a disapprobation of ourselves, if, with the clearer view of consequences now presented to us, we are to continue to desire to perform the very action, to have abstained from which before would have excited our remorse. The utility of reason, then, is sufficiently obvious, even in morality; since, in a world so complicated as this, in which various interests are continually mingling, and in which the good of one may be the evil of many; a mere blind obedience to that voice, which would tell us instantly, and without reflection, in every case, to seek the good of any one, as soon as it was in our power to be instrumental to it, might produce the misery of many nations, or of many ages, in the relief of a few temporary wants of a few individuals. By far the greater portion of political evil, which nations suffer, arises, indeed, from this very source, not so much from the tyranny of power, however tyrannical power may too frequently have been, as from its erring benevolence, in the far greater number of cases, in which it was exercised with the wish of promoting that very good which was delayed, or, perhaps, wholly impeded, by the very means that were chosen to

further it. If those rulers, who were truly desirous of the happiness of their people, had only known how they could most effectually produce that happiness which they wished, there can be no question, that the earth at present would have exhibited appearances very different from those which, on the greater part of its surface, meet our melancholy view; that it would then have presented to us an aspect of general freedom and happiness, which not man only, but the great Father and lover of man, might have delighted to behold. Reason, then, though it is incapable of giving birth to the notion of moral excellence, has yet important relations to that good which is the direct object of morality.

Let none with heedless tongue from Truth disjoin
The reign of Virtue. Ere the dayspring flow'd,
Like sisters link'd in Concord's golden chain,
They stood before the great Eternal Mind,
Their common parent; and by him were both
Sent forth among his creatures, hand in hand,
Inseparably join'd: nor e'er did Truth
Find an apt ear to listen to her lore,
Which knew not Virtue's voice; nor, save where Truth's
Majestic words are heard and understood,
Doth Virtue deign to inhabit. Go, inquire
Of Nature; not among Tartarean rocks,
Whither the hungry vulture with its prey
Returns; not where the lion's sullen roar
At noon resounds along the lonely banks
Of ancient Tigris; but her gentler scenes,
The dovecot, and the shepherd's fold at morn,
Consult; or by the meadow's fragrant hedge,
In spring-time, when the woodlands first are green,
Attend the linnet singing to his mate,
Couch'd o'er their tender young. To this fond care
Thou dost not Virtue's honourable name
Attribute: wherefore, save that not one gleam
Of truth did e'er discover to themselves
Their little hearts, or teach them, by the effects
Of that parental love, the love itself
To judge, and measure its officious deeds?
But man, whose eyelids Truth has fill'd with day,

Discerns how skilfully to bounteous ends
His wise affections move ; with free accord
Adopts their guidance ; yields himself secure
To Nature's prudent impulse ; and converts
Instinct to duty and to sacred law.¹

Important, however, as reason is, in pointing out all the possible physical consequences of actions, and all the different degrees of probability of these, it must not be forgotten, that this is all which it truly does ; that our moral sentiment itself depends on another principle of our mind ; and that, if we had not previously been capable of loving the good of others as good, and of hating the production of evil as evil, to show us that the happiness of every created being depended on our choice, would have excited in us as little eagerness to do what was to be so extensively beneficial, as if we had conceived, that only a single individual was to profit by it, or no individual whatever.

These remarks will show you the inadequacy of the moral systems, which make virtue, in our contemplation of it, a sort of product of reasoning, like any other abstract relation which we are capable of discovering intellectually ; that of Clarke, for example, which supposes it to consist in the regulation of our conduct, according to certain fitnesses which we perceive in things, or a peculiar congruity of certain relations to each other ; and that of Wollaston, which supposes virtue to consist in acting according to the truth of things, in treating objects according to their real character, and not according to a character or properties which they truly have not,—a system which is virtually the same as that of Clarke, expressing only more awkwardly what is not very simply developed, indeed, even in Dr. Clarke's speculations. These systems, independently of their general defect, in making incongruity—which, as mere incongruity, bears no proportion to vice, but is often greatest in the most

¹ Akenside's Pleasures of Imagination, Book II. 158-190, second form of the Poem.

frivolous improprieties — the measure of vice, assume, it must be remembered, the previous existence of feelings, for which all the congruities of which they speak, and the mere power of discovering such congruities, are insufficient to account. There must be a principle of moral regard, independent of reason ; or reason may, in vain, see a thousand fitnesses, and a thousand truths, and would be warmed with the same lively emotions of indignation against an inaccurate timepiece, or an error in arithmetical calculation, as against the wretch who robbed, by every fraud which could elude the law, those who had already little of which they could be deprived, that he might riot a little more luxuriously, while the helpless, whom he had plundered, were starving around him.

Fitness, as understood by every one, is obviously a word expressive only of relation. It indicates skill, indeed, in the artist, whatever the end may be ; but, considered abstractly from the nature of the end, it is indicative of skill only. It is to the good or evil of the end that we look, and that we must always look, in estimating the good or evil of the fitness itself ; and if it be the nature of the end which gives value to the fitness, it is not the fitness, but the end to which the fitness is subservient, that must be the true object of moral regard. The fitness of virtue for producing serene delight, is not, as mere fitness, greater than that of vice for producing disquietude and wretchedness ; and we act, therefore, as much according to the mere fitnesses of things, in being vicious as being virtuous. If the world had been adapted for the production of misery, with fitnesses opposite indeed in kind, but exactly equal in number and nicety of adjustment to those which are at present so beautifully employed in the production of happiness, we should still have framed our views and our actions according to these fitnesses ; but our moral view of the universe and of its author would have been absolutely reversed. We should have seen the fitnesses of things

precisely as before, but we should have seen them with hatred instead of love.

Since every human action, then, in producing any effect whatever, must be in conformity with the fitnesses of things, the limitation of virtue to actions which are in conformity with these fitnesses, has no meaning, unless we have previously distinguished the ends which are morally good from the ends which are morally evil, and limited the conformity of which we speak, to the one of these classes. In this case, however, the theory of fitnesses, it is evident, far from accounting for the origin of moral distinctions, proceeds on the admission of them ; it presupposes a distinctive love of certain virtuous ends, by their relation to which all the fitnesses of actions are to be measured ; and the system of Dr. Clarke, therefore, if stripped of its pompous phraseology, and translated into common language, is nothing more than the very simple truism or tautology, that to act virtuously is to act in conformity with virtue.

From this doctrine of conformity to the fitness of things the theory of Wollaston, in which virtue is represented to consist in the conformity of our actions to the true nature of things, scarcely differs, as I have said, in any respect, unless as being a little more circuitous and complicated. The truth of which Wollaston speaks, is only virtue under another name ; and if we had no previous notions of moral good and evil, — no love of the happiness of others more than of their misery, it would be absolutely impossible to determine whether virtue or vice were truth or falsehood, even in the sense in which he uses these terms. If, indeed, we previously take for granted that it is the nature, the true nature, of the parent to be loved by the child, of the child to love the parent, we cannot then, it will be allowed, have any hesitation in admitting that the child, in performing offices of tenderness to the parent, treats the parent according to his true nature ; and that, if he were to treat him unkindly, he would treat him not according to his true

nature, but as if he were a foe, to whose true nature such usage would be accordant. In taking for granted this very nature, however, the agreement or disagreement with which we have chosen to denominate truth or falsehood, is it not evident that we have taken for granted all those duties which are strangely said to depend on the perception of an agreement, that cannot even be conceived by us, till the duties themselves, as constituting the real nature or truth of our various relations, in the actions which are said to agree with it, have been previously supposed? If there were no previous belief of the different moral relations of foes and friends, but all were regarded by us as indifferent, how could any species of conduct which was true with respect to the one, be false with respect to the other? It is false indeed to nature, but it is false to nature only because it is false to that virtue which, before we thought of truth or falsehood, distinguished, with the clear perception of different moral duties, our benefactor from our insidious enemy.

The work of Mr. Wollaston, which, with all its pedantry of ostentatious erudition, and the manifest absurdity of its leading principle, has many profound reflections and acute remarks, which render it valuable on its own account, appears to me, however, I must confess, more valuable for the light which it indirectly throws on the nature of the prejudices that pervert our judgment, than for the truths which it contains in itself. If I were desirous of convincing any one of the influence of a system in producing, in the mind of its author, a ready acquiescence in errors the most absurd, and in explanations far more necessary to be explained than the very difficulties which they professed to remove or illustrate, I know no work which I could put into his hands better suited for this purpose than the *Religion of Nature Delineated*. Who but the author of such a system could believe for a moment that parricide is a crime only for the same reason which would make it a crime for any

one (and, if the great principle of the system be just, a crime exactly of the same amount) to walk across a room on his hands and feet, because he would then be guilty of the practical untruth of using his hands, not as if they were hands, but as if they were feet ; as, in parricide, he would be guilty of the practical untruth of treating a parent as if he were not a parent, but a robber or a murderer ? Even without considering guilt so atrocious, is common cruelty, in any of its forms, made hateful to us as it should be, or even hateful in the slightest degree of moral disgust, by being represented only as the half-ludicrous falsehood of affirming practically, that a man is not a man capable of feeling, but an insensible post ? and is it only for a similar falsehood, in this tacit proposition, which we are supposed by our negligence to affirm, that we should reproach ourselves, if we had left any one to perish, whom a slight effort on our part would have saved from destruction ? “Should I find a man grievously hurt by some accident,” says Wollaston, “fallen down, alone, and, without present help, like to perish, or see his house on fire, nobody being near to help or call out ; in this extremity, if I do not give him my assistance immediately, I do not do it at all ; and by this refusing to do it according to my ability, I deny his case to be what it is ; human nature to be what it is ; and even those desires and expectations which I am conscious to myself I should have under the like misfortune, to be what they are.”¹ These strange denials we certainly do not make ; all which we tacitly declare is, on the contrary, a truth, and a truth of the most unquestionable kind. We affirm ourselves to be what we are, indifferent to the miseries of others : and if to affirm a truth by our actions be all which constitutes virtue, we act as virtuously in this tacit declaration of our insensibility, as if we had flown instantly to the aid of the sufferer, with the most compas-

sionate declaration of our feeling; or rather, if, with the same indifference at heart, we had stooped our body, or stretched out our hand to relieve him, our very attempt to give the slightest relief, according to the theory of moral falsehood, would have been only a crime additional.

Reason, then, as distinguishing the conformity or unconformity of actions with the fitnesses of things, or the moral truth or falsehood of actions, is not the principle from which we derive our moral sentiments. These very sentiments, on the contrary, are necessary before we can feel that moral fitness or moral truth, according to which we are said to estimate actions as right or wrong. All actions, virtuous and vicious, have a tendency or fitness of one sort or other; and every action which the benevolent and malevolent perform, with a view to a certain end, may alike have a fitness for producing that end. There is not an action, then, which may not be in conformity with the fitnesses of things; and if the feelings of exclusive approbation and disapprobation that constitute our moral emotions be not presupposed, in spite of the thousand fitnesses which reason may have shown us, all actions must be morally indifferent. They are not thus indifferent, because the ends to which reason shows certain actions to be most suitable, are ends which we have previously felt to be worthy of our moral choice; and we are virtuous in conforming our actions to these ends, not because our actions have a physical relation to the end, as the wheels and pulleys of a machine have to the motion which is to result from them; but because the desire of producing this very end has a relation, which has been previously felt, to our moral emotion. The moral truth, in like manner, which reason is said to show us, consists in the agreement of our actions with a certain frame of mind which nature has previously distinguished to us as virtuous; without which previous distinction the actions of the most ferocious tyrant, and of the most generous and intrepid patriot, would be equally true, as

alike indicative of the real nature of the oppressor of a nation, and of the assertor and guardian of its rights.

The fitness and the truth, then, in every case, presuppose virtue as an object of moral sentiment, and do not constitute or evolve it.

The moral use of reason, in influencing our approbation and disapprobation, is, as I before remarked, to point out to us the remote good, which we do not perceive, or the elements of mixed good and evil, which also, but for the analytic power of reason, we should be incapable of distinguishing with accuracy in the immediate compound result. If the mere discovery of greater utility, however, is sufficient to affect our approbation, utility must, it is evident, have a certain relation to virtue. Utility, it is said, is the measure of virtue. Let us consider what meaning is to be attached to this phrase.

LECTURE V.

OF HUME'S SYSTEM, THAT UTILITY IS THE CONSTITUENT OR MEASURE
OF VIRTUE.

IN my last Lecture I examined, at as great a length as a doctrine so false in its principles requires, the system of Dr. Mandeville with respect to virtue; a system in which the actions that commonly go under that honourable name, are represented as, in every instance where any seeming sacrifice is made to the happiness of another, the result of a calculating vanity that, in its love of praise, consents to barter, for a suitable equivalent of commendation, the means of enjoyment which it would not give without a due equivalent, but which it values less than the applause that is to be offered in purchase of them. The pretender to gene-

rosity, who is a speculator in this species of traffic, is of course a hypocrite by the very quality of the moral ware in which he jobs; and the applauders of the ostensible generosity, who are as little capable of unpaid admiration as he of gratuitous bounty, are hypocrites of equal skill, in the supposed universal cheat of social life. All are impostors, or all are dupes, or rather, all are at once impostors and dupes, dupes easily deceived by impostors whom it is easy to deceive. On a system, of which I may safely take for granted, that every one of you has in the delightful remembrances of his own breast innumerable confutations, I should not have thought it necessary to dwell, if there had been less peril in the adoption of it to happiness and virtue. As a philosophic system it is scarcely worthy of discussion. It is an evident example of an error that is very common in hypothetical systems; the error of supposing, notwithstanding the most striking seeming contrarieties, that what is true of a few cases out of many, is therefore necessarily true of all. Some men are hypocrites, therefore all men are hypocrites. It is not absolutely impossible, that he whom the world honours as virtuous for a life, which, from youth to old age, has had the uniform semblance of regard for the happiness of others, may have no virtue whatever at heart; therefore, it may be affirmed, with certainty, that he has no virtue whatever. Such are the two propositions, which, though not expressed in these precise terms, constitute truly the whole logic of Mandeville. They are the very essence of his system; and unless we admit them as logically just, we must reject his system as logically false. But it is in his rhetoric that he trusts far more than in his defective logic; and if he have given us a few lively picturings of hypocrisy, he flatters himself that we shall not pause to inquire, whether pictures so lively are representations of a few only, or of all mankind.

What should we think of a moral theorist who, after

painting some coarse debauch in the midnight profligacy of the lowest alehouse, or the wider drunkenness and riot of a fair or an election, should seriously exhibit to us those pictures as evidence of an universal conclusion, that all men are drunkards? We might admire the verbal painting, indeed, as we admire the pictures of Hogarth; but we should admire as little the soundness of the philosophy as we should have admired the accuracy of one of Hogarth's pictures, if he had exhibited to us the interior of a brothel as a representation of domestic life, a faithful sketch of one of those virtuous and smiling groups, that around a virtuous and delighted father, at his own parlour fire, seem to enclose him, as it were, within a circle of happiness! It is certainly not more absurd to argue, that, because some men are drunkards all men are drunkards, than to contend that all men are, in every action of their life, indifferent to the happiness of every other being, because some may be hypocrites in affecting to regard any happiness but their own; and he who, in adopting this theory, can seriously believe that there is not a single parent, or wife, or child, who has any other view than the selfish one of acquiring praise, in any one office of seeming kindness to those whom they would wish us to regard as dear to them, may certainly believe with equal reason, and admire as ingenious and just, the wildest absurdity which the wildest propounder of absurdities can offer to his assent and admiration.

This system, by a little extension to all the sources of selfish enjoyment, and by a little purification of the selfishness, as the enjoyment is rendered less prominently selfish by being more remote and more connected by many direct or indirect ties with the happiness of others, assumes the form of the more general theory of selfish morals, in which the most refined virtue is represented only as disguised self-love; though the veil, which is thin in itself, so as often to afford no disguise to the passion which glows through it, is sometimes thickened in so many folds, that it is scarcely

possible to guess what features of ugliness or beauty are beneath. Before considering, however, this finer system of moral selfishness, which is founded on views of remote personal advantage, and therefore in a great measure on the skill that detects those elements of distant good, I conceived that we might derive some aid to our inquiry, by considering first the relations which reason, the great analyzer and detector of those elements of distant good, bears to morality ; and consequently, as in their fittest place, those systems which would reduce all our moral feelings to intellectual discoveries made by that power, which is supposed, in these systems, to determine the very nature of vice and virtue, in the same way as it extracts roots, measures angles, and determines specific gravities, or affinities, or quantities of motion.

We considered, then, two celebrated systems of this sort that found morality on reason ; one which supposes virtue to consist in the accommodation of our actions to the fitnesses of things, and another which supposes it to consist in actions that are conformable to truth. In both cases I showed you, that the systems, far from accounting for our moral feelings, or showing them to be the result of a process of ratiocination, proceed on the susceptibility of these feelings, as an essential part of our mental constitution, independent of every thing that can be resolved into reasoning. If we were not formed to love previously the happiness of others, and to have a moral approbation of the wish of producing happiness, in vain would reason tell us, after tracing a thousand consequences, that an action will be more generally beneficial than, but for this analytic investigation, we should have supposed. If we were not formed to love certain ends of moral good rather than certain other ends of moral evil, the mere fitnesses, or means of producing these ends, must be as indifferent to us as that indifferent good or evil which they tend to produce. If we have formed no previous moral conception of certain

duties, as forming that truth of character to which vice is said to be false, there will be as little falsehood, and therefore, if vice be only a want of conformity to truth, as little vice, in the most cruel and unrelenting malignity, as in the most generous benevolence. In every case in which we suppose reason to be thus morally exercised, we must, as I said, presuppose certain feelings of love and approbation that constitute all which is truly moral in our sentiments of actions ; or the discovery of mere consequences of general good, mere fitnesses, mere truths, will be as powerless to affect us with moral regard, as a new combination of wheels and pulleys, or a new solution of a geometric problem.

But, though the discovery of certain fitnesses or congruities, such as those of which Clarke speaks, or of a certain conformity to truth, such as that of which Wollaston speaks, or of the beneficial and injurious consequences of certain actions, considered as a mere series of consequences, discoverable by the understanding, like any other series of physical effects, may not be capable of giving birth to moral feeling, without some peculiar and previous susceptibility in the mind of being so affected ; may they not at least indirectly give birth to it, by presenting to this original susceptibility of moral emotion its peculiar objects ? Whatever may be the principle that develops it, does not the approving sentiment arise, on the contemplation of actions that are in their tendency beneficial to individuals, and thus to society in general, and only on the contemplation of actions that are thus beneficial ? Is not utility, therefore, since it appears to be essential, in some greater or less degree, to the whole class of actions that are termed virtuous, the constituent or the measure of virtue itself ?

The doctrine of the utility of actions, as that which constitutes them virtuous, has been delivered with all the force of which the doctrine seems capable, by the genius of Mr. Hume, who has formed it into an elaborate system of

morals. It has ever since entered largely into the vague speculations on the principles of virtue, in which minds that are rather fond of theorizing than capable of it, are apt to indulge ; and we seldom hear in familiar discussion any allusion to the principle or principles of moral sentiment, without some loose reference to this relation, which that moral sentiment is supposed to bear to the utility of the actions approved. That it does bear a certain relation to it is unquestionable, though a relation which is not always very distinctly conceived by those who are in the frequent habit of speaking of it. It will be the more important, then, to endeavour to separate what is true in the common language on the subject, from the error which frequently accompanies it.

Benevolence, as the very name implies, is always a wish of good to others ; and every benevolent action, therefore, must be intended to be of advantage to somebody. But if by the measure of virtue, when utility is said to be the constituent or measure of the actions that are denominated virtuous, be meant that to which the virtue is in exact proportion, increasing always as the mere physical advantage increases, and decreasing always as the mere physical advantage decreases ; and if it be said that such actions only are felt to be meritorious, in which the agent is supposed to have willed directly that which appeared to him at the moment of his willing it most useful, and to have willed it with moral approbation for this reason only, because it appeared to him most useful ; utility, in this general sense, is so far from being the measure of virtue, that there is comparatively but a very small number of virtuous actions to which the measure can be applied, and very few, indeed, in which the proportion will be found to hold with exactness.

That virtuous actions do all tend in some greater or less degree to the advantage of the world, is indeed a fact, with respect to which there can be no doubt. The important

question, however, is, whether the specific amount of utility be that which we have in view, and which alone we have in view, in the approbation which we give to certain actions; since this approbation is the direct feeling of virtue itself, without which, as intervening, it will be allowed that even the most useful action could not be counted by us as virtuous; whether we love the generosity of our benefactor, with an emotion exactly the same in kind, however different it may be in degree, as that with which we love the bank-bill, or the estate which he may have given us; in short, to use Dr. Smith's strong language, whether "we have no other reason for praising a man, than that for which we commend a chest of drawers."

It may be necessary, in this discussion, to remind you once more, that virtue is nothing in itself, any more than our other general terms, which we have invented to express a number of particulars comprehended in them; that what is true of virtue, then, must be true of all the particular actions to which we give that name; and that all which we have to consider in the present argument, is not the vague general term, but some particular action, that is to say, some particular agent, in certain circumstances, willing a certain effect; since the feeling which rises in the mind, on the contemplation of this particular action, is that which leads us to class it with other actions that may have excited a similar vivid sentiment, and to employ for the whole the common term virtue. The question then is, whether it be necessary to the rise of this vivid sentiment, the moral emotion of approbation or disapprobation, that we should have in immediate contemplation, as the sole object of the emotion, the utility or inutility of the action; and whether the emotion itself be always exactly proportioned by us to the quantity of usefulness which we may have found, by a sort of intellectual calculation or measurement, in the action itself, or in the principle of the action. It is the vivid

feeling of moral approbation alone, which leads us to distinguish actions as virtuous or vicious ; and the supposed measure or standard of virtue, therefore, must relate to this vivid feeling in all its degrees, or it cannot have any relation to the virtue that in all its degrees is marked by that vivid feeling only.

If the utility of actions be their moral standard, then it must be present to the contemplation of the agent himself, when he morally prefers one mode of conduct to another ; and to the contemplation of others, when they morally approve or disapprove of his action.

In every moral action that can be estimated by us, these two sets of feelings may be taken into account ; the feelings of the agent when he meditated and willed the action ; and the feelings of the spectator, or of him who calmly contemplates the action at any distance of space or time. Let us consider, then, in the first place, the agent himself. The agent, indeed, may be under the influence of passions, from which the spectator is free, and may thus have his moral discernment less clear, so as to be hurried perhaps into actions which, with better moral vision, he would have shunned. But the principle of approbation itself is not essentially different in his mind, when the action which he contemplates is one which he meditates himself, and when he contemplates the action of another already performed ; and, if it be not according to any measurement of exact utility, that the approbation and consequent moral will or resolution of the most virtuous agent is formed, it must be allowed to be a powerful presumption at least, or more than a mere presumption, that the approbation of the spectator, arising from the same principle, is not the result of such a measurement of the good that is to be added, by that particular action, to the general good of the world, or of the general utility of the principle from which it flows. With respect to the views of the agent, however, there seems to be little ground for dispute. His views, even when he

seems to ourselves most commendable, but rarely extend to such general interests. The exact scale of utility of an action, in short, or of the principle of the action, is not present to his mind as the standard by which he regulates his conduct. Does the mother, when she hangs sleepless, night after night, over the cradle of her sick infant, think even for a single moment, that it is for the good of the society of mankind, that she should labour to preserve that little being which is so dear to her for itself, and the abandonment of which, though no other being in the universe were to be affected by it, would seem to her a crime of scarcely conceivable atrocity; and are we to refuse to her patience and tenderness, and watchfulness of regard, the name of virtue, because she has thought only of some little comfort that might possibly flow to the individual, and has not measured her own personal sacrifices with that general good, to which they should have been exactly adapted, nor estimated the general advantage of maternal love, as a principle of conduct which operates, and is continually to operate, in all the families of mankind? When we enter some wretched hovel, and see that wretchedness, which is so much more dreadful to the eye of him who beholds it, than to the ear of him who is told, in his splendid apartment, that there is misery upon the earth, — and who thinks that in pitying it, with the very idleness of pity, he has felt as a good man should feel; when we look through the darkness, to which there is no sunshine, on some corner darker still, where the father of those who have strength only to hang over him and weep, is giving to them his last blessing, which is all that remains to him to give; do we feel, on looking at this mixture of death, and sickness, and despair, and want, in dreadful assemblage, that it would be well for the world if a little relief were given to miseries so hopeless; or that compassion, as a principle of conduct, is of the highest usefulness, where there are so many sufferers on the earth, who may be objects of compassion? Of the principle

of the action, in its relation to general utility, we never think. We hasten to do what it is in our power to do ; and we have already obtained looks of as much gratitude, as could be felt in a moment of such affliction, long before we have thought of any thing more than what was before our very eyes. In all the small courtesies of society as well as in these higher duties, we act, not from any estimate of the principle of courtesy as a general principle, but from the temporary views of individual gratifications to those who mingle with us ; and we act well. The amount of general good, which a philosopher might estimate, or attempt to estimate, by considering the relation of these particular actions to the advantage of the community, never occurs as an object of contemplation to the multitude of mankind, when they approve or disapprove, with feelings at least as vivid as those of him who measures every action by its remotest consequences. It occurs but seldom, even to philosophers themselves, who may derive, indeed, an additional enjoyment from tracing that relation, and an additional reason to adore the goodness of him who has established it ; but who, in the common transactions of life, act from the same immediate feelings of approvableness, the same immediate impulses of virtuous emotion, as those to whom ethical and political generalizations are absolutely unknown. The immediate virtuous impulse is the mere feeling of rapid approbation, that becomes still more rapidly choice or determination ; a feeling which has relation only to the particular case, and which, far from pausing for any extensive view and measurement of remote consequences of utility, has arisen in the instant, or almost in the very instant, in which the action was conceived.

But the feelings of the agent himself, whom alone we have yet considered, it may perhaps be said, furnish no decisive confutation of the supposed moral measurement of the virtue of actions, by the feeling of their precise degrees of general utility ; they may afford a presumption, but

nothing more ; and it is in the calm contemplation of the indifferent spectator, or reader, or hearer of an action only, that we are to look for the grounds of a just moral estimate of the virtue or vice which the action itself involves.

The exclusion of the feelings of the agent himself, in the moral estimate of the propriety or impropriety of the actions which circumstances call on him to perform, and on account of which he is to be ranked with the virtuous or the guilty, may seem a very bold use of the privilege of unlimited supposition which a theorist assumes. Let the assumption, however, be admitted. Let the feelings of the agent be left wholly out of account, and let us think only of the feelings of him who contemplates the action of another. Is the approbation of virtue, in this case, the feeling of mere utility ? our indignation, disgust, abhorrence of vice, in its aspects of greatest atrocity, a feeling of nothing more than of the uselessness, or physical encumbrance and detriment to society, of that profitless thing which we call a tyrant or a parricide ? The doctrine of utility, as the felt essence of virtue, is in this case as little in agreement with the moral facts which it would explain, as in the case of the feelings of the agent himself ; as little accordant with them as any false hypothesis in mere physics, with the stubbornly resisting physical facts, which it would vainly endeavour to reconcile, or at least to force together.

If the approbation which we give to virtue be only the emotion excited in us by the contemplation of what is useful to mankind, it is very evident that such utility is to be found, not in the actions only of voluntary agents, and in the general principles of conduct from which the particular actions flow, but in inanimate matter also ; and indeed, on earth at least, it is only by the intervention of matter that one mind can indirectly be of any utility whatever to any other mind. Let us imagine, then, not a mere chest of drawers before us, — for that may be counted of too trifling convenience, — but the most useful machine which

the art of man has been able to devise, — a loom, for example, a ship, a printing-press, instruments which have certainly contributed to the happiness of the world a far greater amount of good than any moral action of any generous benefactor, whose voluntary production of a little limited good, perhaps to a single individual only, may yet have excited in us the liveliest emotions of a regard that is almost veneration, or more than mere veneration. When we think of any one of these noble instruments, as placed before our eyes, or when any one of them is actually before our eyes, and when we trace all the contrivances of its parts, and think of the good which has for many ages resulted, and will still continue to result from the whole, does it seem to us possible that any one should assert, or almost that any one should imagine, for a moment, the sameness in kind of the intellectual admiration, if I may so express it, which we feel in such a case, with the moral admiration that is excited in us by the patriot or the martyr; or even by the humblest of those who, in their little sphere of private life, in the ordinary circumstances of peaceful society, exert, for the good of the few who are around them, an energy of active benevolence, as powerful as that which, in a more elevated station, and in a tumultuous age, ennobles the leader and the sufferer in the cause of nations and of the world? Our admiration of a steam-engine, our admiration of an heroic sacrifice of personal comfort, or of life itself, are feelings that can scarcely be said to have any greater resemblance than the brightness of scarlet and the shrillness of a trumpet; and the blind man who asserted the similarity of these two sensations, was, I cannot but think, (if our consciousness is to decide on the comparative merit of the theories,) at least as sound a theorist as he who would convince us of the similarity of the two emotions. Indeed, if we were to strive to conceive all the possibilities of extravagant assertion, it would not be easy to imagine one less warranted by fact, than that which would affirm

that we love a benefactor exactly with the same feelings as those with which we regard a house or a loaf of bread ; or at least that there is no difference, but as one or the other may have been in degree more or less to us or to the world in general.

If, indeed, mere matter could, by the most beautiful subserviency to our happiness, become a reasonable object of moral admiration, by what means have we been able to escape an universal idolatry ? How is it that we are not, at this moment, all adorers of that earth on which we dwell, or of that great luminary which renders our earth not habitable merely, but delightful ? The ancient worshippers of the universe at least supposed it to be animated with a soul. It was the soul of the world which they adored. The savage, who trembles at the thunder, and bends before the whirlwind that kneels which does not bow to man, believes that there is some being greater than man who presides over the awful darkness. But, according to the system of utility, the belief of a soul of the world, or of a ruler of the lightning and the storm, which even the savage thinks necessary, before he deign to worship, is superfluous for our more philosophic veneration. The earth, whether animated or inanimate, is alike that which supports and feeds us. The sun, whether animated or inanimate, is alike to us the source of warmth and light, and of all that infinity of blessings which these simple words involve. The earth and the sun, then, if mere utility were to be considered as virtue, the sole standard on the contemplation of which certain moral emotions arise, and by which we measure their vividness, are the most virtuous beings that come beneath our view ; and love, respect, veneration, such as we give to the virtues of the most virtuous human beings, are far too slight an offering of the heart to utilities so transcendent.

It is evidently, then, not mere utility which constitutes the essence of virtue, or which constitutes the measure of

virtue; since we feel, for the most useful inanimate objects, even when their usefulness is to continue as long as the whole race of beings that from age to age are to be capable of profiting by them, no emotions of the kind which we feel, when we consider the voluntary actions of those who are capable of knowing and willing the good which they produce. A benevolent man and a steam-engine may both be instrumental to the happiness of society; and the quantity of happiness produced by the unconscious machine may be greater perhaps than that produced by the living agent; but there is no imaginary increase or diminution of the utility of the one and of the other, that can make the feelings with which we view them shadow into each other, or correspond in any point of the scale.

Though it is impossible for the theorist not to feel the irresistible force of this argument, when he strives in vain to think of some infinite accession of utility to a mere machine, which may procure for it all the veneration that is given to virtue, he can yet take refuge in the obscurity of a verbal distinction. Utility, he will tell us, is not in every instance followed by this veneration: it is only utility in the actions of living beings that is followed by it; and when even all the useful actions of living beings are shown not to produce it, but only such actions as had in view that moral good which we admire, he will consent to narrow his limitation still more, and confine the utility, which he regards as the same with virtue, to certain voluntary actions of living beings. Does he not perceive, however, that in making these limitations he has conceded the very point in question? He admits that the actions of men are not valued merely as being useful, in which case they must have ranked in virtue with all things that are useful, exactly according to their place in the scale of utility, but for something which may be useful, or rather which is useful, yet which, merely as useful, never could have excited the feelings which it excites when considered as a voluntary

choice of good. He admits an approvableness, then, peculiar to living and voluntary agents, a capacity of exciting certain vivid moral emotions which are not commensurable with any utility, since no accession of mere utility could produce them. In short, he admits every thing for which the assertor of the peculiar and essential distinctions of virtue contends; and all which he gains by his verbal distinction of utilities is, that his admission of the doctrine which he professes to oppose, is tacit only, not open and direct.

It is, indeed, by a verbal distinction of this sort, that Mr. Hume himself, the most ingenious and liberal supporter of this system, endeavours to obviate the force of the objection, which may be drawn from inanimate matter, as useful and yet incapable of exciting moral emotion. He does, for the purpose of saving his theory, what is not easy to be reconciled with the acuteness of a mind so subtle as his, and so well practised in detecting, or at least so fond of detecting, what he considers as illogical in the speculations of other writers, or in the general easy faith of the half-reasoning multitude. He fairly takes for granted, as independent of any measurement of mere utility, those very moral feelings which he yet wishes us to believe to arise from the perception of mere utility; thus abandoning his theory as false, in order that we may admit it as true. The utility of inanimate things, he says, does not seem to us virtuous, because it is not accompanied with esteem and approbation which are peculiar to living beings; and he states this distinction of the two utilities, without seeming to be at all aware that, in supposing a moral esteem and approbation distinct from the feeling of usefulness, he is thus presupposing the very feeling for which he professes to account; and denying that strict relation of utility to virtue, which his theory would hold out as the only standard, or rather as the only constituent of virtue. The passage is too important not to be quoted in his own words. "We ought not to imagine," he says, "because an inanimate object may be

useful as well as a man, that therefore it ought also, according to this system, to merit the appellation of virtuous. The sentiments excited by utility are in the two cases very different; and the one is mixed with affection, esteem, approbation, &c. and not the other." Now it is obviously of these very sentiments alone, which are said by Hume to be mixed with the feeling of utility, and not produced by it, that the moral theorist has to trace the origin. If the sentiments excited by the utility in the two cases be, as he most justly observes, very different, even when the amount of mere utility may be the same in both; then, most indubitably, it is not as being useful that actions are counted virtuous, and rated in different degrees of virtue according to their different degrees of usefulness; but on account of something that must be superadded to this usefulness; and if, independently of the sum of good which they may produce, and equally produce, one utility and not the other be attended with esteem and approbation, is not this a proof that the moral esteem and approbation are not commensurable with mere physical usefulness; that they are feelings of a peculiar class, which even he, who would represent actions as felt to be virtuous only because they are regarded as physically useful, is obliged to presuppose; and that there is in virtue, therefore, an independent and peculiar approvableness, or capacity of exciting "esteem and approbation," which utility is incapable either of constituting or of measuring?

In this argument, I have opposed to the actions which we feel immediately as virtuous, the utility only of inanimate matter, because this furnishes a more striking contrast; but the same argument, as you cannot fail to have perceived, might have been extended to many qualities of the mind itself, in all those varieties of original genius, or of the rich endowments of science, that have progressively raised us from barbarism to civilization, with an influence on the happiness of the world, to which it is scarcely possible in

our conception to fix a limit ; of talents which we admire indeed, and honour with a respect of a peculiar kind ; but our respect for which, even when they exist in their highest order of excellence, we feel to be of a species very different from the moral esteem which we give to an act of virtue. The inventors of the printing-press certainly did more good to the world by that mere invention, than the Man of Ross himself by all his charities ; yet how different are the moral emotions with which we view them !

The mere usefulness of certain actions, then, I repeat, is not that which, as felt by us at the moment of our approbation, constitutes to us or measures their virtue ; it is not that which is immediately felt by the agent ; it is not that which is immediately felt by the spectator or hearer of the action ; and yet utility and virtue are related, so intimately related, that there is perhaps no action generally felt by us as virtuous, which it would not be generally beneficial that all mankind in similar circumstances should imitate. This general relation, however, is one which we discover only on reflection, and of which multitudes have perhaps never once thought during the whole course of their life ; yet these have esteemed and hated like other people. The utility accompanies, indeed, our moral approbation ; but the perception of that utility does not constitute our moral approbation, nor is it necessarily presupposed by it.

I may remark, by the way, as a circumstance which has probably contributed, in a great degree, to this misconception of the immediate object of moral approbation, that in cases of political legislation, the very end of which is not to look to the present only, but to the future, we estimate the propriety of certain measures by their usefulness. That which is to be injurious we do not enact ; and those who contend that we should enact it, think it necessary to show that it will be for general advantage. Expediency being thus the circumstance on which the debates as to the propriety or impropriety of public measures in almost every

case depend, we learn to consider it very falsely as the measure of our moral approbation in the particular cases that are constantly occurring in domestic life. We forget that the legislator is appointed for the express purpose of consulting the general good, and of looking to the future, therefore, and distant, as well as to the present or the near. His object is to see *ne quid detrimenti respublica capiat*. His relation is to the community, not to any particular individual; and in neglecting the general good for the good of a few, he would be guilty of a breach of trust, as much as the possessor of a deposit, if he were to give to the wants of some indigent sufferer, the money which another had intrusted to his care.

In the general transactions of ordinary life, then, our feeling of approbation or disapprobation, we may conclude, does not depend on the mere perception of utility. The virtuous, by the very constitution of Heaven, which has pre-established the connexion of virtue and happiness, will, indeed, that which is useful; but they will it, in each particular case, without regard to the general utility of the principle of conduct to which their action conforms; and, in considering the actions of others, we approve of that which is useful, but we do not approve of it because we have estimated, according to a scale of specific value, the mere usefulness of the general principle. We perceive a moral excellence, as something very different from the amount of physical advantage that flows from the particular action, or from all the similar actions of the same class; an excellence which, of itself, constitutes the approvableness; a virtue which is independent of every thing but of the breast of him who conceived it; which is not ennobled by success, and which becomes more interesting to us by the very misfortunes to which it may have led.

The coincidence of general good, with those particular affections which are felt by us to be virtuous, is, indeed, it must be admitted, a proof that this general good has been

the object of some being who has adapted them to each other. But it was of a being far higher than man — of him who alone is able to comprehend the whole system of things; and who allots to our humbler faculties and affections those partial objects which alone they are able to comprehend; giving us still, however, the noble privilege

————— To join
Our partial movements with the master-wheel
Of the great world, and serve that sacred end,
Which he, the unerring reason, keeps in view.¹

By this relation, of which few think or are capable of thinking, of particular good with public good, of general utility and private virtue, the public good is as effectually ensured as if all were every moment thinking of the relation, and is ensured with a still greater accession and profusion of delight.

“Happiness,” it has been truly said, “is best provided for by the division of affection, as wealth by the division of labour. Were all men to measure their actions by utility,” the same writer justly remarks, “that variety of sentiments and passions which at present renders human society so interesting, and, like a happy combination of notes in music, produces an enchanting harmony, must be reduced to the dull monotony of one tranquil sentiment. Every man, it is true, would meet his neighbour with the mild aspect of calm philosophy, and with the placid smile of perfect benevolence; but no eye must be seen sparkling with rapture or melting with tenderness, no tongue must utter words of kindness, which have not first been exactly measured on the scale of universal benevolence. In short, the moral world would become one flat unvaried scene, resembling the aspect which the natural world would assume, were all its mountains and valleys levelled,

¹ Pleasures of Imagination, book ii.

and its whole surface converted into a smooth and grassy plain."

That virtue is useful, is indeed true then ; so useful, that without its existence would not have been a blessing, but a source of misery ; and a society of mankind but a combination of the miserable, labouring to become individually more wretched, by making each other more wretched. Yet it is not more true, that virtue is useful, than that this utility of the general principles of virtuous conduct is not the ground of our immediate approbation. It is not the standard of our approbation ; for we have approved, long before we think of that which is said to have been the measure according to which we have approved. This priority of the approbation in all its degrees, to any thought of specific utility, is true even of philosophers, who know that there is such a coincidence of the relations of virtue and usefulness ; but of all who feel virtue, who love and hate, who esteem, and honour, and despise, how few are they who know that there is any such relation ! They do not approve or disapprove the less, however, but it is because God has willed the happiness of the world, which, as a great whole, they are unconsciously promoting, not because they individually have thought of it. He, indeed, who fixed the relations of things, before the system of things itself was formed by him, established this paramount relation of our generous desires, to an aggregate of happiness far greater than that momentary benefit which was their particular aim. The good of the universe was the gracious object of his will, — his object, not more in the physical enjoyments which he has poured upon us, than in the virtues of which he gave us the noble capacity. But though it was for that universality of happiness, which the eternal Author of the universe alone could fully comprehend in his conception and design, that man was rendered virtuous, our limited virtues themselves have their particular objects, which they are better able to embrace. By

their joint operation, they produce that great result, of which they do not think even while they are most busy in promoting it; intent perhaps only on courtesies and kindnesses, which appear to terminate in the individual who receives them; like the sunshine, that seems to be only flowing around the blossom in soft and brilliant varieties of light, while it is slowly and silently maturing fruits that are yet unseen; or like the breeze, which seems only to flutter in the sail, or to dimple the wave before the prow, but which is at the same time wafting along the majestic vessel that is to mingle the treasures of every clime, to carry plenty to the barren soil, and the richer stores of science to the still more desolate barrenness of the mind.

LECTURE VI.

EXAMINATION OF HUME'S SYSTEM CONCLUDED; OF THE SELFISH SYSTEM.

My last Lecture was employed in considering the relation which the utility of actions bears to our approbation of them as virtuous.

That in acting, the agent himself, in cases in which no one would hesitate for a moment in terming him virtuous, except those who deny every distinction of vice and virtue, performs the action which is approved, without any regard to the amount of general good which would flow to society, if all men were to act as he acts, that is to say, without any regard to the specific utility of such actions, is evident from the slightest examination of human conduct. Of all the virtuous actions which are performed at any one moment on the earth, from the slightest reciprocation of domestic courtesies, to the most generous sacrifices of heroic friendship, there is perhaps scarcely one, in which this thought

of the supposed scale of utility, according to which his action is to be measured, is present to the mind of the agent, and is the influencing circumstance in his choice, the immediate motive which confers on his conduct the character of virtue. He is useful to the world, indeed, when he relieves the sufferings even of a single individual being. But he relieves that suffering, not because the world, if he gives the relief, will, as a whole, have less misery; or because it would be for the advantage of the world that others should imitate him in similar cases; but that the individual before him may have less misery: or, if he think of any thing but that particular misery and its relief, he thinks only of the manner in which he would appear to himself, if he were to abstain from giving the relief which is in his power. He bears sufferings of his own, in like manner, without lamentation; not because a single groan from him, in any case of bodily anguish, would increase the misery of the world, or lessen its happiness, but because a single groan, though it might leave the happiness of the world precisely the same as before, would degrade him in his own estimation. Whether in doing or in suffering, therefore, his virtue, if any virtue be allowed to him, does not depend on his views of the general utility which the world derives from a frame of mind like that which his conduct displays. That comprehensive usefulness is not present to his mind, as a scale or measure of his virtue.

But though it be not the precise measure of approbation and preference in his own mind, it may perhaps be the precise and sole measure of approbation, when his actions or patient sufferings are considered by other minds. In this case, too, we found that the supposed standard is far from being the real standard. We approve, not from any wide calculation of probable consequences to the world, if all were to act as the individual has acted, but from an instant feeling of moral excellence, which makes it impossible for us not to approve, as soon as the action, in all

its circumstances, is known to us. If we think of the general utility of such a general mode of conduct, it is not before, but after the approbation; and it is no paradox to say, that our approbation has, in truth, least reference to general conduct and general consequences, in cases in which the virtue of which we approve is greatest; because, in such cases, the moral excellence produces an emotion so vivid, as to preclude the consideration of every remote circumstance. The hero himself, bearing what he bore, or doing what he did, is all which our mind can see. Who is there, that, in the contemplation of Thermopylæ, and of the virtues that have made that desolate spot for ever sacred to us, can think of Leonidas and his little band, without any emotion of reverence, till the thought occur, how useful it must be to nations to have defenders so intrepid! Our admiration is not so tardy a calculator. It is instant in all its fervour; and, when we begin to think of the exact point in the scale of utility at which the action may be ranked, this very thought is itself a proof that our emotion has already become less vivid. The question, indeed, is one which our consciousness may decide in a moment, if we only trust to the evidence of our consciousness; a sort of trust which, simple as it may seem, is no slight intellectual effort, when our consciousness is opposed to errors that are brilliant, and that have the authority of any great name. Our consciousness, if we appeal to it, will tell us, that to admire what is useful, and to revere what is virtuous, are feelings as different as any two feelings which are not absolutely opposite; and that, if we class them as the same, we may, with as much reason, class as the same, and reduce under a single term, our moral veneration and our sensation of fragrance, because they are both pleasing; or our admiration of what is useful, and our notion of a circle, because they are both states or feelings of the mind. Who ever looked on his conscience precisely in the same manner as he looked upon his estate; and felt not regret

merely, but all the agonies of remorse, because his acres were less productive than the richer fields of his neighbour? We may respect the inventor of a machine, but we certainly do not respect the machine itself; though it is only in reference to the instruments which he invents that the inventor, as an inventor, has any utility; and, even in respecting his intellectual talents as an inventor, though he may have contributed more by this one exercise of them, to the permanent happiness of the world, than all the virtues of all the multitude that existed around him at the time, do we feel for his new and beautiful application of the physical powers, the moral emotion which we feel for the humblest of those virtues? It is enough, as I have said, to appeal to your consciousness on this point. If your reverence for virtue appear to you, as it cannot but appear to you, a feeling essentially different from your mere admiration of what is useful; if, in short, you perceive that no addition of useful properties to any piece of inanimate matter could so alter it, as to make it an object of moral love; that the philosopher's stone itself, if it really existed, though capable of conferring inexhaustible wealth and eternal youth on its possessor, would yet be incapable of producing one feeling of cordial regard; that all the stores of knowledge, and all the talents of the most vigorous intellect, unless accompanied with a generous desire of the happiness of those who profit by them, cannot excite the moral emotions that are excited so readily by the humblest benevolence; then, surely, you cannot hesitate for an instant in rejecting the theory, which supposes virtue to be felt as virtue only from its utility, from that utility which may be greater or less than the usefulness of external things or of qualities of the understanding; but which, as mere utility, is precisely the same in its relation to our emotions, as the intellectual qualities of memory or judgment; or as the house which shelters us, the coat which keeps us

warm, or the watch which tells us the hour and minute of the day.

The approbation which we give to actions as virtuous, then, whether we be ourselves the agents, or merely consider the actions of others, is not given to them simply as useful. Utility, in either case, is not the measure of moral approbation, the measure to which we must previously have adjusted the particular action, before any approbation of it can have arisen; and with which, in all its exact gradations, the feeling of the rank of virtue exactly corresponds.

It may be said, indeed, that it is not mere utility which excites moral approbation, but the utility only that results from the actions of living agents. This latter species of usefulness may be verbally distinguished from the other, as being that which is accompanied with esteem and approbation; and, indeed, this very distinction we find to be that which is made by Mr. Hume, the most acute defender of the theory which we have been examining; yet it is surely very evident, that the verbal distinction thus made is an abandonment of the theory, an admission that there is, in certain actions of voluntary agents, something more than utility which is morally admired by us; since, in degrees of utility, they may be strictly commensurable with other objects of thought that excite in us no such emotion. The esteem and approbation, which Mr. Hume finds it so easy to presuppose, are all which it is of much consequence, in any theory of virtue, to consider. They are in truth the very feeling of virtue itself under another name; the very feeling, therefore, which he should have shown, not to be mixed only with our perception of utility, but to arise from it, or to be reducible to it; and if, in accounting for our moral approbation of certain actions, as distinguished from our admiration of any useful contrivance in mechanics, or any useful qualities of natural inanimate objects, or any excellence of mere intellect,—he

say, that, together with our feeling of the utility of the actions, there is a feeling of esteem and approbation, which distinguishes this usefulness from every other usefulness of the same amount ; he admits, in this very supposition, that there is in certain actions an approvableness which has not its source in the feeling of utility,—an approvableness which is independent, therefore, of the mere quantity of physical good produced ; and that, when an action has been useful, is still necessary to convert utility itself into virtue.

It is true, indeed, as we have seen in our review of such actions, that actions which are virtuous are actions of which the general principle is useful ; but they are virtuous and useful ; not felt by us to be virtuous, merely because they are of a certain rank of usefulness, as innumerable objects in external nature are in like manner useful, or many valuable qualities of the understanding. The coincidence in this respect, which the Deity, who adapted our emotions to the happiness designed by him, has, from his own universal goodness established, may be compared in some measure to that pre-established harmony of which the followers of Leibnitz speak. According to that hypothesis, the body and mind have an exact correspondence of motions and feelings, but are absolutely independent of each other, even when they seem most exactly to correspond ; the limbs running of themselves when the mind wishes them to run, and running faster or slower exactly as the mind wishes them to be more or less fleet ; but having, in consequence of their own peculiar mechanism, a tendency to run so independent of the volition of that mind which longs to escape from the enemy, that, if the soul of the coward were, by a sudden miracle, to be annihilated, his legs would not run the less. Such a harmony the Deity has established of virtue and utility. That of which we approve as virtuous is, as a general mode of conduct, useful ; though it is not on

account of our estimate of its general useful tendency that we give it our immediate approbation. That of which we disapprove as vice, is, as a general mode of conduct, injurious to society; though it is not on that general account we regard it with instant contempt, or indignation, or horror. By this adaptation of our emotions, however, the same advantage is obtained, as if we approved of virtue directly as useful to the world, in the same manner as we approve of any useful mechanical contrivance; while it leaves us the enjoyment of all that far greater delight, which arises from the contemplation of the moral excellence of the individual, and from the love so infinitely surpassing every preference of mere utility, which moral excellence, and moral excellence only, can excite.

It is this independent pre-established relation of virtue and utility, which, as I conceive, has rendered less apparent the error of the theory that would reduce moral approbation itself, to the perception of this mere usefulness; and the illusion has certainly been aided in a great degree, by the circumstance which I pointed out in my last lecture; the reference to the public advantage, in the enactments of laws, and the discussion of national measures of external or internal policy. These measures, to be virtuous, must indeed always have the public good in immediate view; because the legislative and executive functions of the state are either expressly or virtually trusts for this very purpose; and a neglect of the public good in those who exercise such functions has, therefore, all the guilt of a breach of trust in addition to any other partial delinquencies that may have been added to the crime. It is not very wonderful, however, that we should thus learn to extend to all particular actions, what is true of those actions of general delegated power, which are the great subjects of temporary debate; and should erroneously suppose all men in their little sphere to be swayed, when they are virtuous, by the

motives which alone we recognise as giving virtue to the actions of legislators, judges, or sovereigns, those actions about which all men speak, and which furnish so much nice casuistry to the political discourse of every day.

Though it is not from calculations of general happiness, then, that we approve or disapprove in estimating the conduct of others, or our own, in many cases it will still be admitted that general happiness bears, not an indirect relation only, but a direct relation to our moral sentiments. The good of the world is not our only moral object, but it is a moral object. The sacrifices of mere personal advantage that are made to it, excite our regard ; the wilful violation of it, for purposes of personal gain, would excite our scorn or detestation ; but they excite these moral feelings not in any peculiar manner, as if primary and paramount. They excite them precisely in the same manner as sacrifices to parental, or filial, or conjugal affection, made without the slightest consideration of public advantage, give immediate rise to our delightful sympathies ; or, as the breach of any of the domestic duties, with circumstances of cruelty to the individuals injured, but without any intention of injuring the community or the world, awakes a wrath or a disgust almost as instant as the very knowledge of the injury. We should have loved our parents and our friends, though public utility had never been an object of our thought ; it is not quite so certain, at least it is not so manifest, that we should have loved the good of the world, if we had never known what it is to love a parent or a friend. For my own part, indeed, I do not doubt that even in this case, if our mental constitution in other respects had remained as at present, the happiness of mankind would have been an object of our desire ; and that we should have felt a moral disapprobation of any one who wilfully lessened that sum of general happiness, for the mere pleasure of giving pain. But still the passion for universal utility is not so manifest in every individual,

certainly not so vivid in every individual, as the private affections ; and if we were to judge from the feelings alone, therefore, it would seem a juster theory to derive our love of the happiness of the world from our love of the friends who first surrounded us in life, than to suppose that our early essential notions of virtue and vice, in the observance or neglect of the filial or fraternal duties, are measured by a scale of general utility which has never been present to our mind ; that general utility and virtue in our estimates of actions, are in truth convertible terms ; and that we should have felt no wonder or dislike, even of parricide itself, if we had not previously been enamoured of public usefulness,—enamoured of that good of the universe of which the good of a parent is a small elementary part.

When the political moralist is said to correct our moral sentiments, as he unquestionably does often correct our views of particular actions, by pointing out to us general advantages or disadvantages, which flow more or less immediately from certain actions ; and when he thus leads us to approve of actions of which we might otherwise have disapproved, to disapprove of actions of which otherwise we should have approved, he does not truly alter the nature of our moral feelings ; he only presents new objects to our moral discrimination. From the mixture of good and evil, in the complicated results of almost every action, and from the innumerable relations which our actions bear in their results, not to the individuals alone, of whom alone we may have thought, but to others whose interest was unknown to us at the time, or unremembered in the eager precipitancy of our benevolence ; we may approve at times of actions of which we disapprove at other times, not because we hate the good which we loved before, or love the evil which before we hated ; but because the action, though seemingly the same, is truly to our conception different. It is varied, to our mental view, with every nicer analysis of its results ; and, in estimating the same apparent action, the new-

discovered compound of good and evil which we now love, is as different from that semblance of mere evil which we before hated, as our love itself, as a present emotion, differs from our former emotion of hatred or disgust.

Reason, then, even in analyzing compound results of good and evil, and showing us the relation which actions that are truly virtuous bear to the good of the world, is not the source from which our moral sentiments flow, that have admired and loved the virtue before its political advantages were pointed out, or even suspected. The conclusion to which we are led, therefore, with respect to utility, is, that it is not the scale which is present to the mind whenever we approve or disapprove, and according to which our moral emotions are in every case exactly graduated; that though the good of the world is an object which we cannot consider, without feeling that the wish to promote it is a moral wish, it is not the only object which it is virtuous to desire, but one of many virtuous objects; and that, if we are virtuous once, in acting with this single object in view, we are virtuous a thousand times, in acting without the slightest reference to it, with regard only to the happiness or distress of individuals, which we cannot consider without a wish to preserve the happiness, or to lessen the distress, — a wish which we should have felt in like manner, though, with the exception of the individuals of whom we think at the moment, there had been no world to be benefited by our wishes and our aid, or by the aid of those who, in similar circumstances, may act as we have done.

The most important circumstance, however, with respect to the theory of utility as the essence of virtuous actions, is that which I remarked before, in entering on this discussion, — that it does not profess to account for the origin of our moral feelings, but proceeds on our susceptibility of these as an undoubted principle of the mind. Why should I love that which may be productive of

benefit to all the individuals of the world, more than that which would be productive of similar benefit only to one individual? or, to put a question still stronger, why should I love that which would be of advantage even to one individual, more than that which would be of injury to every being but myself? The only answer which can be given, even according to the theory which supposes all virtue to consist in utility, is, that it is impossible for me, by my very nature, not to feel approbation of that which is generally useful; disapprobation of that which is in its general consequences hurtful. There is a moral principle — a susceptibility of moral emotion — that is a part of my constitution, with which I can as little abstain from approving or disapproving, when I hear of certain actions, as I can abstain from simply hearing the words of that voice which relates them to me.

The error which we have been considering at so much length, as to the identity of virtue and the general utility of actions,—though I must confess that it appears to me, notwithstanding the high authorities by which it has been sanctioned, an error of no slight kind, is yet an error which is not inconsistent with the most generous virtue; since, though it assert utility to be the measure of our approbation, it does not confine this utility to our own individual advantage; but gives to us, as a great object of regard, whatever can be useful to the community of mankind. It is a very different doctrine that makes the utility, according to which we measure virtue, in every case our own individual advantage. To the consideration of this doctrine, which is in truth only an extension of the principles of Mandeville, allowing less to the mere love of praise, and more to our other passions,—you may remember that I was about to proceed, after treating of the system of that licentious satirist of our nature, when I suspended this progress to make you acquainted with the general doctrines of the influence of reason on moral sentiment, and of the relation

of virtue and usefulness ; as I conceived that my remarks on those doctrines would render more apparent to you the futility of the selfish system of morals.

Virtue, according to this system, is the mere search of pleasure. It gives up one pleasure, indeed, but it gives it up for a greater. It sacrifices a present enjoyment ; but it sacrifices it only to obtain some enjoyment which, in intensity and duration, is fairly worth the sacrifice. In every instance in which it seems to pursue the good of others as good, it is its own gratification, and nothing but its own gratification, which it seeks.

To this system, which, from the days of Aristippus, has, both in ancient and modern times, been presented in various forms, the remarks which I made on the system of general utility are equally applicable. We do unquestionably love our own well-being, our bodily ease, and that pleasure which is still dearer than ease ; but, loving ourselves, we as unquestionably love others ; and loving them, we cannot fail to desire their happiness, since the desire may be considered as the natural consequence of the love. In such cases, the immediate object of our desire—and it is this immediate object alone which we have theoretically to consider—is as truly the good of others, as our own good is our immediate object, when we wish for freedom from any bodily pain, or for the possession of any object which appears to us productive of positive pleasure. All of which we think, at the moment of the action, is purely benevolent ; and the action, therefore, if justly designated, must itself be regarded as purely benevolent.

There is, indeed, as I remarked in a former lecture, one very simple argument by which every attempt to maintain the disinterested nature of virtue is opposed. If we will the happiness of any one, it is said, it must be agreeable to us that he should be happy, since we have willed it ; it must be painful to us not to obtain our wish ; and with the pleasure of the gratification before us, and the pain of

failure, can we doubt that we have our own happiness in view, however zealously we may seem to others, and even perhaps to ourselves, to have in view only some addition to another's happiness? This argument, though often urged with an air of triumph, as if it were irresistible, is a quibble, and nothing more. The question is not, whether it be agreeable to act in a certain manner, and painful not to act in that manner; but whether the pleasure and the pain be the objects of our immediate contemplation in the desire? and this is not proved by the mere assertion that virtue is delightful, and that, to be restrained from the exercise of virtue, if it were possible, would be the most oppressive restraint under which a good man could be placed. There is a pleasure, in like manner, attending moderate exercise of our limbs; and to fetter our limbs, when we wish to move them, would be to inflict on us no slight disquietude. But how absurd would that sophistry seem, which should say, that, when we hasten to the relief of one who is in peril, or in sorrow, whom we feel that we have the power of relieving, we hasten because it is agreeable to us to walk; and because, if we were prevented from walking, when we wished thus to change our place, the restraint imposed on us would be very disagreeable. Yet this is the very argument, under another form, which the selfish philosophers adduce, in support of their miserable system. They forget, or are not aware, that the very objection which they thus urge, contains in itself its own confutation, — a confutation stronger than a thousand arguments.

Why is it that the pleasure is felt in the case supposed? It is because the generous desire is previously felt; and if there had been no previous generous desire, there could not be the pleasure that is afterwards felt in the gratification of the desire. Why is it, in like manner, that pain is felt, when the desire of the happiness of others has not been gratified? It is surely because we have previously

desired the happiness of others. That very delight, therefore, which is said to give occasion to the selfish wish, is itself a proof, and a convincing proof, that man is not selfish; unless we invert all reasoning, and suppose that it is in every instance the effect which gives occasion to the cause, not the cause which produces the effect. The virtuous man feels delight in the sacrifices which he makes! unquestionably he does feel this delight; a delight which he would not yield for any thing but for the knowledge that his sacrifice has been of the advantage which he desired to the friend for whom it was made,—if the loss of the pleasure which he feels could have been made a part of the sacrifice. The virtuous man is happy; and if it were necessary for proving that he is not selfish, that we should show him to be miserable for having done his duty, the cause of disinterested virtue, I confess, must be given up; and, perhaps, in that case, if the attending pleasure or pain, and not the motive, is to be considered, the name of absolute disinterestedness might be appropriated to those whom we now count selfish—to him who deceives, and plunders, and oppresses, and finds no satisfaction in his accumulated frauds and villanies of every kind. Why does it seem to us absurd to say, that a wretch, who is incapable of any generous feeling, and who never acts but with a view to some direct personal enjoyment, is not to be counted selfish, because he derives no actual enjoyment from the attainment of his sordid wishes? If it be absurd to say, that, in thinking only of his own good, he is not selfish, because no happiness has attended his selfishness; it is just as absurd to say, that the virtuous man, in thinking of the good of others, is selfish, because happiness has attended the very sacrifices which he has made. The one is selfish, though not happy, because his immediate and sole motive was his own happiness; the other is disinterested though happy, because, in acting, his immediate motive was the happiness of others. The more the benevolent live for

others, the more, there can be no doubt, they live for themselves; but they live for themselves in this case without thinking of themselves. Their great object is to make man happy, wherever the happiness of a single individual is in their power; and their own happiness they safely leave to Him who has not forgotten the virtuous, in the distribution which he has made of enjoyment. It comes to them without their seeking it; or rather, it does not come to them,—it is for ever within their heart.

Even if virtue were as selfish as it is most strangely said to be, I may observe, that it would be necessary to form two divisions of selfish actions; one of those selfish actions, in which self was the direct object, and another of those very different selfish actions, in which the selfish gratification was sought in the good of others. He who submitted to poverty, to ignominy, to death, for the sake of one who had been his friend and benefactor, would be still a very different being, and ought surely, therefore, to be classed still differently from him who robbed his friend of the scanty relics of a fortune which his credulous benevolence had before divided with him; and, not content with this additional plunder, calumniated perhaps the very kindness which had snatched him from ruin.

————— A self there is,
Of virtue fond, that kindles at her charms.
A self there is, as fond of every vice,
While every virtue wounds it to the heart;
Humility degrades it, Justice robs,
Blest Bounty beggars it, fair truth betrays,
And godlike Magnanimity destroys.¹

By what perversion of language is the same term to be given to affections so different? The foreigner of whom Dr. Franklin speaks, who, on seeing the tragedy of Othello, conceived that all the emotion which the actor exhibited was for the loss of a handkerchief, did indeed form a theory

¹ Young's Night Thoughts, Night viii.

as just as that of many very ingenious philosophers, when they would labour to convince us, that a little personal gratification was the only object of those who, in the dreadful ages of Roman tyranny, followed their friend into exile or imprisonment ; or who, after he had nobly perished, still dared to proclaim that innocence, the very assertion of which was a crime, which the tyrant, who knew only how to pardon what was atrocious, and not what was virtuous, was, by the habits which he had wrought into the dreadful constitution of his nature, incapable of forgiving.

If virtue be nothing but personal gain, what is it which we individually can hope to acquire from the virtues of others? We surely cannot hope that all the virtues of all mankind will give us more wealth than is possessed by the wealthiest individual existing ; more power than is possessed by the most powerful ; more vigour of body and intellect than is possessed by the healthiest and the wisest. Let us imagine, then, all these promised to us, on the condition of our admiration ; let us conceive that some human demon, a Nero, a Tiberius, a Caligula, were to show to any one of us all the kingdoms of the world, and to say, "All these thou shalt have, if thou wilt but esteem me," — would our esteem arise at all more readily? Should we feel, in that case, for the guilty offerer of so many means of happiness, a single emotion like that which we feel for the humblest virtue of one who, we know, never can be of any aid to our worldly advancement? If a virtuous action be in itself nothing, except as a source of personal gain, why, in such a case as that which I have supposed, does not our heart feel its sentiments of esteem and abhorrence vary with every new accession of happiness which is promised to us? At first, indeed, we may feel a loathing for the tyrant, not because tyranny is in itself less worthy of approbation than the mildest benevolence, but because it may be more injurious to our interest. It would require no trifling

equivalent; but still, as it is only a quantity of injury which is dreaded, an equivalent may be found; and, with every new bribe for our esteem, there is of course a nearer approach to this equivalent. Our abhorrence should gradually subside into slight indignation, and this into very slight dislike; and this, again, when the bribe is increased, become at length some slight emotion of approbation, which may rise, with the still increasing bribe, through all the stages of love, through esteem, respect, veneration, till we feel ultimately for the tyrant, whose power is to us a source of so much happiness, all that devotion of the heart which we so readily yield to power that is exerted for the benefit of mankind. When we labour to think of this progressive transmutation of moral sentiment, while the guilty object of it continues the same in every respect, but as he offers a greater or less bribe for our affection, do we not feel, by the inconsistency which strikes us at every supposed stage of the progress, that affection — the pure affection which loves virtue and hates vice — is not any thing which can be bought but by that noble price, which is the virtue itself, that is honoured by us; and that to bribe us to love what is viewed by us with horror, or to hate what is viewed by us with tenderness or reverence, is an attempt as hopeless as it would be to bribe us to regard objects as purple which are yellow, or yellow which are purple? We may, indeed, agree, by a sacrifice of truth, to call that purple which we see to be yellow, as we may agree, by a still more profligate sacrifice of every noble feeling, to offer to tyranny the homage of our adulation, — to say to the murderer of Thræsea Pætus, “Thou hast done well,” — to the parricide who murdered Agrippina, “Thou hast done more than well.” As every new victim falls, we may lift our voice in still louder flattery. We may fall at the proud feet, we may beg, as a boon, the honour of kissing that bloody hand which has been lifted against the helpless; we may do more; we may bring the altar, and the sacrifice, and

implore the god not to ascend too soon to heaven. This we may do, for this we have the sad remembrance, that beings of a human form and soul have done. But this is all which we can do. We can constrain our tongue to be false; our features to bend themselves to the semblance of that passionate adoration which we wish to express; our knees to fall prostrate; but our heart we cannot constrain. There virtue must still have a voice which is not to be drowned by hymns and acclamations; there the crimes which we laud as virtues are crimes still; and he whom we have made a god is the most contemptible of mankind; if, indeed, we do not feel perhaps that we are ourselves still more contemptible. When is it, I may ask, that the virtue of any one appears to us most amiable? Is it when it seems attended with every thing that can excite the envy even of the wicked, — with wealth, with power, with all which is commonly termed good fortune; and when, if its influence on our emotions depend on the mere images of enjoyment which it suggests, these may surely be supposed to arise most readily? It is amiable, indeed, even in such circumstances; but how much more interesting is it to us, when it is loaded with afflictions from which it alone can derive happiness. It is Socrates in the prison of whom we think — Aristides in exile; and perhaps Cato, whatever comparative esteem he might have excited, would have been little more interesting in our eyes than Cæsar himself, if Cæsar had not been a successful usurper.

It is in describing the retreat and disasters to which that last defender of Roman freedom was exposed, that Lucan exclaims, with a sympathy almost of exultation,

Hunc ego per Syrtes, Lybiæque extrema, triumphum
Ducere maluerim, quam ter Capitolia curru
Scandere Pompeii, quam frangere colla Jugurthæ.¹

¹ Lib. ix. 598-600.

What proof can be imagined stronger than this, that virtue and the source of personal gain are not identical phrases ; since no accession of personal interest can make that a virtue which was before a vice ; nor any loss of personal interest make that a vice which was before a virtue ? If, in any physical science, a similar error were maintained, there is not a philosopher who would not instantly reject it. Let us conceive, for example, some one ignorant enough or bold enough to affirm, that the gravity of bodies depends on their quantity of heat. We should think that we had nothing more to do, for showing the absurdity of such an opinion, than to try the effect of increasing and diminishing the warmth of the gravitating bodies ; and, if we found the weight to remain the same during all these changes ; if we found one body to be warmer than another, and yet heavier ; colder than a third body, and yet heavier, we should think ourselves fairly entitled to infer, that warmth and gravity were not the same ; that a body might gravitate and be warm, as, indeed, every body which gravitates may be said to have some heat, as every substance which is warm has some weight ; but that the gravity did not depend on the warmth, and bore no measurable proportion to it. This, in external physics, we should think a sufficient demonstration. But, in morals, the sophist finds a sort of shelter in the indistinct conceptions of those to whom he addresses himself. It is proved, as indubitable, that our admiration of virtue has no measurable proportion to our feeling of personal profit which may be reaped from it ; that the profit may be increased, indefinitely, without the slightest diminution of our abhorrence of vice ; and the loss increased indefinitely without any diminution of our admiration of virtue. But, notwithstanding this demonstration, that virtue is conceived by us as something more than a mere source of personal enjoyment to us, he still asserts that they are strictly synonymous ; and renews, with as brilliant ingenuity as before,

that sly logic, which would be irresistible if an epigram were an argument, and a series of epigrams a perfect demonstration.

We have seen, then, that the admiration of actions as virtuous, is not affected by calculations of loss and gain, and must, therefore, be something more than that loss or gain which, in our calculation, we perceive to be manifestly increased or diminished. There is another demonstration which seems not less irresistible. If what we admire in the virtue of others be nothing more than its tendency, more or less direct, to our individual advantage, the relations on which this tendency depends must be perceived by us before we admire; and the discernment of these is not a simple and easy intellectual effort. The mind that is matured by long observation of society, and by profound reflection on those ties which make the action of one man a source of profit or injury to remote individuals, may, indeed, look with esteem on certain actions, and with indignation on others. Our love of virtue and hatred of vice, if they arise from such knowledge, must be in every case progressive as the knowledge itself, from infancy to old age. To relate to a child some action of cruelty, must be to speak to an indifferent heart,—to a heart which cannot have made these nice reflections, and which cannot, therefore, feel what is not to be felt without the knowledge which those reflections give. Every nursery, then, exhibits a fair field for an experiment that may be said to be decisive; and will the selfish moralist submit his theory to the test? Will he take upon his knee that little creature which has, perhaps, scarcely felt a pain since it entered into life, which knows only that it has a friend in every living being that has met its eye, and which has never thought of its own misery as a thing that is possible? Will he watch that listening countenance, every look of which is fixed on his own, as he repeats verse after verse of the ballad which describes some act of injustice and atrocious

cruelty ; and will he expect to see no tear in those eyes ; to hear no sobbings when the misery is extreme ; to discover no demonstrations of an indignant wrath, that thinks not of itself at the time, but thinks only of the oppressed whom it would gladly succour, of the oppressor on whom it would gladly inflict vengeance ? It will be well for that child if, in the corruption of the world, he retain a sympathy with the good and the wretched, and a hatred of guilt, as ardent as he feels in those years of ignorance ; if, on learning the relations of virtue to his own happiness, he love it merely as he loved it when he never thought of the relation.

The love of virtue, then, I conclude, is different, and essentially different, from the mere love of selfish gain. It is an affection which leads us to esteem often what is directly injurious to us ; which makes it impossible for the good man not to honour in his heart, as well as in the praise which might seem forced from him, the virtues of that rival by whom he is outstripped in the competition of public dignity, which gains from the commander of an army a respect which nothing can suppress, for the valour, and all the military virtues of the commander opposed to him ; though these very virtues have disquieted him more than the vices of half a nation, though they have robbed him of repose, and, which is still worse, have robbed him of the glory, which was his great object, by bringing on the army which he has led in vain to successive fields, disaster after disaster. It is an affection which can find objects in lands the most remote ; which makes us feel delight in the good qualities of those who lived in ages of which the remembrances of their virtues are the only relics ; and which preserves to our indignation and abhorrence, the crimes of those whom the tomb itself, already in ruins, has rendered powerless to injure us. It is an affection which is itself the truest prosperity of him who feels it ; and which, when the virtuous man does truly seem to suffer

what the world calls adversity, endears to him in his very afflictions, still more, that virtue, without which he might have been what the world terms prosperous.

LECTURE VII.

EXAMINATION OF THE SELFISH SYSTEM, AND ITS MODIFICATIONS,
CONTINUED.

A GREAT part of my last Lecture was employed in considering that theory of morals which would represent all the feelings that appear to us most disinterested, as only the results of selfish calculation; the generous sacrifices of friendship as the barter of some good which we value less for a good which we value more, without any regard to the happiness of those whom it is our policy to distinguish by the flattering term of friends, but who are merely the purchasers and sellers of the different wares of wealth, or power, or honour, or sensual pleasures, which it is our trade, as human beings, to sell and buy. In that wretched exhibition which is made to us of the social intercourse of the world, the friendship of any one, as implying, in every instance, some stratagem or invention of deceit on his part, is, therefore, in every instance, to be dreaded and shunned far more than absolute indifference, or even perhaps than avowed enmity. Nor is it only common friendship which this system would represent as the simulation, and nothing more than the simulation, of the generous feelings that are professed. The virtues which gather us under the domestic roof in delightful confidence of affection, of which we never question the sincerity in others, because we feel it to be sincere in ourselves, when it prompts in us the

kindnesses which we delight to receive, because we have known the delight of conferring them ; these gentle virtues, which almost consecrate to us our home, — as if, in the midst of that wide scene in which the anxieties and vices of the world may rage, it were some divine and sacred place, which distrust and fear cannot enter, — would be driven, by this cold and miserable sophistry, from the roof under which they delighted to repose, — if human folly could prevail over an influence so celestial, and if man could, indeed, become that wretched thing which he would so laboriously represent himself to be. In the tenderness of connubial love, which years of affection have only rendered more vivid, how many are there who, in their chief wishes of happiness, scarcely think of themselves ; or, at least, think of themselves far less as objects of exclusive interest, than as beings whose happiness is necessary to the enjoyment of those whom they delight to render happy ! This seeming devotion, we are told, may indeed be a selfishness a little more refined ; but it is not less the growth or development of absolute and exclusive self-regard. It is a selfishness which sees and seeks its own individual good at a little greater distance ; but, since it is its own individual good which alone, at whatever distance, it is incessantly wishing to see, and as incessantly labouring to obtain, it is still selfishness, as much when it pursues the distant as when it grasps the near ; — a selfishness to which the happiness of those who appear to be loved, is as the mere happiness of another, — if we analyze our desires with sufficient subtlety, — far more uninteresting than the acquisition of the idlest gewgaw which vanity, with all its covetous eagerness, would scarcely stoop to add to its stores.

The fallacy of this system, as I endeavoured to show you, arises chiefly from the pleasure which truly attends our virtuous affections, but which, though universally attending them, it seems to require no very great nicety of discrimin-

ation to distinguish as their consequence, not their cause. We have pleasure, indeed, in conferring a kindness ; but it is because we confer the kindness, and have had the previous desire of conferring it, that we feel this pleasure of being kind ; not because we feel this pleasure, that we confer the kindness ; and if we had never been beneficent, we should as little have known the delight of beneficence, as we should have known what external beauty is, without the previous perception of the forms and colours of the objects which we term beautiful. It would, indeed, have been as just a theory of the primary sensations of vision, to say, that it is because we have a pleasing emotion in beholding the proportions and colours of certain forms, we see those forms and colours which excite in us the pleasing emotion, as, of our moral approbation or disapprobation, to say, that it is because we have pleasure in the performance and contemplation of virtuous actions, and pain in the contemplation and performance of vicious actions, we perceive that very virtue and vice, and form those very desires, virtuous or vicious, to which, as previously existing, we owe the pleasure and the pain that have resulted from them, not produced them, and that cannot even be conceived as pleasure and pain, without necessarily presupposing them. In acting virtuously, we do what it is pleasant to do ; but it is not on account of the pleasure that we perform the action, which it is delightful to us to do, and almost as delightful to us to have done. Indeed, to destroy our pleasure altogether, nothing more would be necessary than to impress us with the belief, that the actions were performed by us, with no other view than to the selfish gratification which we might feel in thinking of them ; and with a total carelessness as to the happiness of those to whose welfare the world conceived us to be making a generous sacrifice. If conformity to selfish gain were all which constitutes virtue, why should our pleasure in this case cease ? It ceases for the best of all reasons, that it arises from virtue, and can

arise only from virtue; and that in such a case, as there would no longer be any virtue, there would, therefore, no longer be any thing to be contemplated with satisfaction. Such is that gross and revolting system which would represent all the seeming moral excellencies of the world, — every generous exertion, every magnanimous forbearance, — as one universal deceit, — one constant unwearied search of personal good, in which not a single wish ever wanders beyond that personal enjoyment of the individual.

There is another form in which the selfish system may be presented to us, less unjust to our nature than that which we have been considering. It may be said, that we now do truly wish for the happiness of others, without any regard to our own immediate interest; but that we have become thus disinterested, by the very influence of selfishness, only because our own interest has formerly been felt to be connected with the interest of others; diminishing and increasing with theirs in so many instances, that the love which was originally confined, and confined in the strictest sense of exclusion to ourselves, is now diffused in some measure to them, as if almost parts of ourselves; that we have learned to value their happiness, however, only on account of the relation which it has been found to bear to ours; but for which relation, as evolved to us more and more distinctly in the whole progress of social life, we should be absolutely incapable of a single wish for their happiness, of a single wish for their freedom from the severest agony, even when their agony was beneath our very view, and could be suspended by our utterance of a single word of command to him who waited in dreadful ministry on the rack or on the stake; or at least, if, in such circumstances, we could have wished any relief to their torture, it must have been merely to free our ears from the noise of groans or shrieks, that, like any other noise, might be a little too loud to be agreeable to us. According to this system, the happiness of others is loved as representa-

tive of our own, in the same way as any object with which our own pleasure has been associated, becomes itself an object of pleasure to us. Our virtues, therefore, arising in every case from the discovery of some relation which the happiness of others bears to our own physical happiness, are not so much the causes of enjoyment, as the results of it; they depend, then, on circumstances that are accidental, varying as the accidental relations to our pleasure vary; and, if they seem to us to have any uniformity, it is only because the circumstances of pleasure, on which they depend, may be regarded as nearly uniform in all the nations of the earth. Every where the parent, the wife, the child, must have been useful to the son, the husband, the father; every where, therefore, these relations, as productive of happiness, or protection, or comfort, in some degree, are relations of love; and every where, in consequence of this factitious love, there are corresponding factitious feelings of duty, filial, connubial, parental.

This modification of the selfish system, as distinguished from the former, has at least the comparative merit of not being in absolute opposition to almost every feeling of our nature; and since it allows us to be at present disinterested, and refers us for the period of absolute moral indifference, to a time antecedent to that which our remembrance can reach, it is not so easy to expose its falsehood, as to expose the gross and obvious falsehood of the system which ascribes to us one lasting selfishness, — a selfishness so unremitting as to be, not for the first years of our life only, but in infancy, in youth, in mature manhood, in the last sordid wishes of a long age of sordid wishes, absolutely incompatible with any affection that is directly and purely benevolent. But though it may be less easy to show the inaccuracy of the view of the great principles of our moral nature, which such a modification of the doctrine of general selfishness presents, the view, which even this modification of the doctrine presents, is false to the noble principles of a nature

that, even in the sophist himself, is far nobler than that which his degrading sophistries would represent him as possessing. There are feelings of moral approbation, independent of all views of personal interest. The happiness of others is to us more than the representation of our own ; and the way in which it contributes most powerfully to our own, is by the generous disinterested wishes which it has previously excited in our breast.

I trust it is superfluous for me to say, that, in contending for the independence and originality of our moral feelings, I do not contend that we are capable of these feelings at a period at which we are incapable of forming any conception of the nature and consequences of actions ; that, for example, we must feel instant gratitude to our mother, or our nurse, for the first sustenance or first cares which we receive, before we are conscious of any thing but of our momentary pleasure or pain ; and, far from knowing the existence of those kind hearts which watch over us, scarcely know that we have ourselves an existence which is capable of being prolonged. This blind virtue, it would indeed be manifestly absurd to suppose ; but this no philosopher has maintained. All which a defender of original tendencies to the emotions that are distinctive of virtue and vice, can be supposed to assert, is, that when we are capable of understanding the consequences of actions, we then have those feelings of moral approbation or disapprobation, which, in their various relations to time, as present, past, or future, I suppose to constitute our moral notions of virtue, merit, obligation. It then becomes impossible for us not to feel, that in giving pain, for the mere pleasure of giving pain, to one whose delight it has been to contribute to our happiness, we should do that which we could not contemplate without a feeling of self-reproach,—as we should have an opposite feeling of self-approbation, in every sacrifice which we might make of our own convenience, to the happiness or the comfort of a person, to whom our mutual services were so justly due.

An action, I have already frequently repeated, is, as a moral object, not the mere production of good or evil, but the intentional production of good or evil. It has no moral meaning whatever, but as it is significant of the frame of mind of the agent himself, willing and producing a particular result; and where the frame of mind of the agent cannot be supposed to be known, or even guessed, it is not to be supposed that any moral feeling should arise, whatever susceptibility the mind may possess of being affected with certain moral emotions, by the contemplation of certain frames of mind of the voluntary producers of good or evil. There is a knowledge then of intention on which our moral sentiments unquestionably depend; but it is only on this knowledge they do depend; and it would be as absurd to refuse to them the appellation of original feelings, on this account, as it would be to refuse to the mind any original susceptibility of the sensations of vision, because there can be no vision till a luminous object be present, nor even then any distinct perception till we have opened our eyelids. There was, indeed, a period at which we had no moral feelings, as there was a period at which we had no sensations of colour; but though we had not the actual feelings, from the absence of the circumstances which are necessary for producing them, we could as little be said to be blind to morality in the one case, as blind to all the splendour and beauty of light in the other.

To, return, however, to that form of the selfish system of morals, which is under our review, I may remark, in the first place, that, as this theory of our affections admits them to be at present disinterested, and refers us for the period of exclusive self-regard, to a time of which the consciousness is absolutely lost to our memory, it would not be entitled to the praise of certainty, even though no objection could be urged against it. It would still be only an hypothesis,—and an hypothesis which, even by the confession of those who maintain it, supposes a state of our feelings

absolutely opposite to that which they have continued to display, during all that long period of our consciousness which we are capable of remembering. It is an hypothesis, all the burden of the proof of which must rest with the assertors of it, — an hypothesis which, even though it were just, it would be impossible to verify, — and an hypothesis which affirms the mind to have been, with respect to the very feelings that are attempted to be explained by it, the reverse of what is at present. But is there no other objection which can be made to this system, than that it is an hypothesis only, which may, if we consent to admit it without proof, be made to tally with the phenomena; but which the phenomena themselves do not at least very obviously appear to warrant us to frame? There is still another very important inquiry: Does it correspond, even as an hypothesis, with the moral appearances, which it is invented to illustrate?

We have moral affections, it is allowed, at present, which are disinterested; but they have become so, it is said, in consequence of the association of our own past pleasures with their objects; and our experience that the safety, and in some measure the comfort of others,—for whom, on their own account, we should be perfectly indifferent whether they be in health or disease, joy or misery,—are necessary to enable them to contribute most effectually to our happiness. We at last seek their happiness for their sake, because we have been accustomed to seek it for our own; and the wilful violations of their pleasure or ease, which were regarded by us at first as inexpedient because they might be hurtful to ourselves, are at last regarded by us as immoral, when we have been so perfectly selfish, for a sufficient length of time, as to cease to be selfish, from the very force of our habits of selfishness.

In opposition to this hypothesis, I need not repeat arguments which have been already urged by me against other false views of our moral nature; and which, as not

less applicable to this view of it, I flatter myself that you will have no difficulty in remembering and applying for yourselves. The nursery, to which I referred in my last lecture as the scene of an experiment that might be considered as decisive with respect to the theory of universal selfishness, would be equally valuable for a similar experiment in the present instance, as to that selfishness, which, though not universal during the whole course of life, is said to be universal at least during childhood. Such an experiment, indeed, would be still more valuable in the present instance, as allowing us the nearest approach which we can make to the time at which the mysterious transmutation of selfishness into disinterested affection is supposed to begin to take place. If all actions which do not immediately affect our own means of physical well-being be originally indifferent to us, and if we learn only by the relations of certain actions to this physical well-being, to regard one species of conduct as virtuous, and another species of conduct as vicious, the child, whose never-failing enjoyments have seemed to him to form a regular part of the day, almost like the hours which compose it, who expects to find to-morrow what he found yesterday, and who as little thinks that he is indebted to any one for the regular food which gratifies his appetite, or the garments which keep him warm, or the little couch on which he lies down happy, to awake happy next morning, as he thinks that he is indebted to any of those around him for the sunny radiance which shines on him, or for the air which he breathes without knowing that he is breathing it; while he lives among smiles and caresses, and regards even these, not as marks of indulgence, but only as proofs of the mere presence of those whose very countenance is love. The little reasoner on his own comforts, and disregarder of all comforts but his own, may indeed be beginning to form the inductions which are to terminate in the belief, that the happiness of others may be instrumental to his happiness;

and that the universe would suffer, and consequently himself, as a part of the universe, be in danger of suffering by the spreading and multiplying relations of guilt to guilt, if an instance of rapacity or cruelty were to occur in some obscure cottage in a distant kingdom. But though he may be beginning to make this philosophic analysis and generalization of the remote relations of things, by which crimes perpetrated in the most remote part of the world, and of a kind from which he has never suffered, may be conceived by him to have ultimately some relation to his own selfish enjoyment, he is surely only beginning to make them. His selfishness is not of sufficient growth to have ceased to be selfish; and his morality, therefore, if morality be the result of fine inductions, which show the good of others to be in some measure representative of our own, cannot have begun to be developed. When he quits his sport, therefore, to listen to the tale which his nurse has promised him, suspending not this particular exercise only, but the very activity that would be every moment urging him to new exercise, as he remains fixed at her knee in a state of quiet of every limb, that but for the delightful horrors which he hears and expects to hear, would be too powerful to be borne; if there be no disinterested affection then, or at least only the faint dawning of such affections, the tale which is related to him, however full it may be of injustice and cruelty, cannot have any powerful influence on his feelings. His love of novelty, indeed, may be gratified by the adventures of the generous warrior, who, at the peril of his own life, attacked the castle of the giant, and opened at last, to give liberty to a hundred trembling prisoners, those dungeon gates which had never before been opened but to fling some new wretch to the living heap of wretchedness, or out of the heap already gathered, to select some one for torture and death. He may listen to such a marvellous tale as he would listen to any thing else that is equally marvellous; but it is only as marvellous that he can be

supposed to listen to it. There is no generous interest in virtue to be gratified in his little heart, because, in his state of secure and tranquil enjoyment, he has had too little experience of the relations of things to know that vice and virtue have that great difference—their only difference—which consists in their likelihood of being of greater or less advantage or disadvantage to him. In hearing of the deliverance of the good, and of the punishment of the wicked, he should have no thought but of the wonderful things which he is to hear next. In short, according to the system which would represent all virtue to be of selfish growth, he should be that cold and indifferent creature which no nursery has ever seen; and which, if every nursery saw in those who are to furnish the mature population of other years, the earth would soon be an unpeopled waste, or, at best, a prison-house of the rapacious and the cruel.

If, without having heard of any hypotheses on the subject, we were told that there is a period of the life of man in which a tale of cruelty may be related to him, and understood, without exciting any emotion, and in which the intentional producer of misery, who produces it in the mere wantonness of power, only that he may have the delight of thinking that he has produced it, and the mild and unrepining sufferer whom he has made his victim, are regarded with equal indifference, is it to his early years that we all should look in making our reference? or, rather, is there not reason to think, that at least an equal number of the estimators of different ages would look to years, when, if generous affections were the result of experience, and grew more purely disinterested, as the experience of the relations of things extended over a larger portion of life, there could not be one sordid and selfish wish remaining with its ancient dominion in the heart?

But, omitting every objection that may be drawn from the appearances of lively moral feeling, at a time when,

according to the hypothesis of original insensibility to every distinction of virtue and vice, there could be no moral feeling of any kind, what, I may ask, is the nature of the change which is supposed to take place in this purification of selfish desires, and are the circumstances assigned as the cause of the purification sufficient to produce it? We are absolutely regardless of the happiness or misery of others; and the actions that would lead to their happiness or misery seem to us to have those different physical tendencies, but are regarded by us only as physically different. Such is said to be the state of the mind at one period. Afterwards we learn to look on others with regard, in consequence of the pleasure which has flowed from them, or attended their presence; and not to look on them with disinterested regard only, and to wish their happiness, but, which is a much more important circumstance, to feel that the neglect or violation of their happiness would be attended with feelings of self-reproach on our part, essentially different from mere regret. The explanation proposed might, perhaps, be thought to account for the affection which we acquire for persons as well as for things that were previously indifferent to us; and even for our wish to add to the happiness of those whom we love, since there scarcely can be affection without such a wish. But the sense of duty is something more than this consciousness of mere affection and of kind wishes. When we have failed to act in conformity with it, we have not a mere feeling of misfortune, as when we have failed in any wish, the success of which did not depend on ourselves; but a moral feeling of self-disapprobation, for which the growth of mere affection, and of all the wishes to which affection can give rise, is insufficient to account. Here, then, is the important transition which should be explained, that by which we pass from love that is factitious, to a feeling of duty that is factitious. It is this feeling of moral approbation or disapprobation,—the difference of common regret from

remorse,—of common joy from the delightful complacencies of virtue,—which is the real subject in controversy ; and this feeling the selfish system, even in that best modification of it which we are considering, leaves wholly unexplained. It asserts us to be selfish, but it does not show, nor even profess to show, how we are thus selfish with notions of morality.

It must never be forgotten, in estimating any theory of morals, that it is not a mere quantity of pleasure or pain, love or dislike, for which the theorist has to account ; but an order of moral notions, pleasant, indeed, in certain references to ourselves or others, painful in certain other references, yet essentially distinct from any varieties of mere physical delight or uneasiness. It is not the joy of a prosperous man for which he has to give a reason, but the complacency of a good conscience ; not the regret of one who has formed wishes of dignified station or wealth that are ungratified, but the remorse of one who has formed guilty wishes, and whose chief misery, perhaps, arises from the gratification of the very wishes which he had formed. It is not the mere wish of contributing to the happiness of those whom we love, but the feeling of obligation to contribute to their happiness,—and often even to contribute to the happiness of individuals for whom we feel no peculiar tenderness of regard. For these peculiar feelings, however, for all that can strictly be said to be moral in love, or even in morality itself, the assertors of the selfish system do not think it necessary to assign any reason, though it is of these only that any explanation is required : and yet they speak of their system as if it were a theory, not of mere pleasure or pain, love or dislike, but of all the phenomena of moral sentiment. They think that they have shown enough, if they have shown how we may love our friends that live around us as we love our house or our estate ; and if they can account for this mere affection, they take for granted

that our feelings of duty, virtue, obligation, and all the moral feelings of conscience, follow of course.

Even with respect to mere affection, unimportant as this is, in a theory of morals, when considered as mere affection, exclusively of all feeling of duty or moral approbation,—the cause assigned for the production and extension of this regard is far from being shown to be adequate. It is a cause which connects us only with a few individuals, and which is yet adduced as explanatory of feelings that are extended in vivid diffusion to all mankind. The associating principle is the cause to which we are directed,—that principle which attaches a high interest to objects that might be considered as in themselves almost indifferent,—a snuff-box, a cane, or any other inanimate thing, which had long been our companion. But though this sort of companionship may render our own cane important to us, as if it were a symbol of our happiness, like the white wands and gold sticks that are symbols of the dignity of office, this love of our own cane does not render every other walking-stick, which we may see in a shop, or in the hands of others, of much greater value, in our conception, than if we had been in the habit of walking without any support. If then it be, as is asserted, precisely in the same manner that we acquire our affection for the living beings around us,—who, otherwise, would have been as indifferent to our regard, as it is possible for a snuff-box or a cane to be,—why is not the effect confined, or nearly confined, to those immediately around us, with whom the associations of pleasure have been formed? Beyond the circle to which the magic of association spreads, every thing should be as before, or at least very nearly as before. For the stranger, whom we have never seen, in the same manner as for the snuff-box of another, we should retain feelings that scarcely pass beyond indifference; and should as little look with affection on all mankind, in consequence

of the pleasure which has attended our intimacy with a few—if affection be in itself foreign to our nature, and the result of factitious circumstances,—as we should look with a covetous eye on every walking-stick, because we should feel sorrow, far beyond its intrinsic worth, on the loss of our own. If, indeed, man be naturally more precious to our affection than the paltry baubles of a toyshop, we may suppose, in his case, a more extensive diffusion of every feeling of regard. But to ascribe to man any original title to our love, independent of the use which we may learn to derive from him, as from a machine that may be instrumental to our convenience, would be to abandon the very principle on which the whole strange system of moral selfishness is founded.

Even as a theory, then, of mere affection, the selfish theory is inadequate. But however widely affection may be supposed to be spread, in consequence of the association and ready suggestion of pleasures received from a few individuals only—though it were admitted, that, by the remembrance of these, we might be led to love all the individuals of mankind, and loving them, to wish their happiness, it must still be remembered, that the only influence of affection, as mere affection, is to render the happiness of others desirable, like the attainment of any other object of desire. Instead of wishing merely the gratification of our sensual appetities, of our intellectual curiosity, of our ambition, we have now other wishes to mingle with these, that relate to the happiness of others; and we may regret that the happiness of others has not been produced by certain actions, in the same way as we may regret that we have not attained the objects of any of our other wishes—that we are not the possessors of a fortunate ticket in the lottery, or have not had the majority of votes in an election to some office of honour or emolument. But joy and regret are all which we can feel, even in love itself; and obligation, virtue, merit, the self-

complacency or remorse of conscience, are as little explained by the growth of mere love and hatred, as if every object of these affections had remained indifferent to us.

We have considered, then, the selfish system in two aspects: first, as it represents mankind as universally, in every hour and minute of their waking existence, intent on one sole object, their own convenience; incapable of feeling any disinterested affection for another; and therefore, when appearing to wish the happiness of a father, or wife, or son, or friend, wishing at heart only their own. We have afterwards considered that less sordid modification of the system, which supposes us, indeed, to have been originally as selfish as the other represents us to be for the whole course of our life; but which does a little more justice to the feelings of our maturer years, by admitting that we become susceptible of affections that prompt us to act, even when our own convenience is not the immediate object before our eyes; and in our examination of both forms of the doctrine, we have seen how incapable it is of explaining those notions of obligation, virtue, merit, that constitute the moral phenomena, which a theory that professes to be a theory of morals, ought as little to omit, as a theory of light to omit all notice of the radiant fluid, the properties of which it professes to examine, while it confines its attention to the forms of the mirrors or lenses which variously reflect or transmit it.

After these two lights, in which the system commonly distinguished by the name of the Selfish System of morals has been considered by us, there remains still one other light in which it is to be viewed; that in which the obligation of virtue is supposed to consist merely in an exclusive regard to our own individual eternity of happiness in another life; and virtue itself to consist in obedience to the will of the Supreme Being; not on account of the moral excellence of that Supreme Being, or of his bounty to us,

which might seem of itself to demand compliances, that are the only possible expressions of the gratitude of dependent creatures, to him from whom their power as well as their happiness is derived, but without any such views of reverence or gratitude, at least without any such views as are in the slightest degree necessary to the virtue of their motives, merely on account of the power which the Ruler of the universe possesses, to give or withhold the happiness which is our only object. This form of the selfish system, which has been embraced by many theological writers of undoubted piety and purity, is notwithstanding, I cannot but think, as degrading to the human character as any other form of the doctrine of absolute selfishness; or rather, it is in itself the most degrading of all the forms which the selfish system can assume; because, while the selfishness which it maintains is as absolute and unremitting, as if the objects of personal gain were to be found in the wealth or honours or sensual pleasures of this earth; this very selfishness is rendered more offensive, by the noble image of the Deity which is continually presented to our mind, and presented in all his benevolence, not to be loved, but to be courted with a mockery of affection. The sensualist of the common system of selfishness, who never thinks of any higher object in the pursuit of the little pleasures which he is miserable enough to regard as happiness, seems to me, even in the brutal stupidity in which he is sunk, a being more worthy of esteem than the selfish of another life; to whose view God is ever present, but who view him always only to feel constantly in their heart, that in loving him who has been the dispenser of all the blessings which they have enjoyed, and who has revealed himself in the glorious character of the diffuser of an immortality of happiness, they love not the giver himself, but only the gifts which they have received, or the gifts that are promised. Yet, such is the influence of the mere admission of the being of a God, and of the images of holiness and

delight which that divine name is sufficient to suggest, that while the common system of the universal selfishness of virtue has been received by the virtuous themselves with an indignant horror, that was itself almost a confutation of the system, the equally universal selfishness of the doctrine of these theological moralists has been received, not merely without any emotion of disgust, but with the approbation and assent of no small portion of those who, in opposition to the very doctrine which they have embraced, are truly in their hearts disinterested lovers of man, and equally disinterested lovers and worshippers of God.

The doctrine of the absolute selfishness of our homage to God, and of our social virtues, considered as the mere conformity of our wills to the command of him who is the dispenser of eternal happiness and eternal misery, for the sole reason of his power of thus dispensing happiness or misery, and not on account of his own transcendent excellence, that of itself might seem to demand such a conformity, is a doctrine of very old date. But the writer who in modern times has led to the widest diffusion of this doctrine, is Archdeacon Paley, the most popular of all our ethical writers; and one of the most judicious in the mere details of ethics, however false and dangerous I consider his leading doctrines to be. Virtue he defines to be, "the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness."¹ The last part of the definition is the most important part of the whole; for, the knowledge of this everlasting happiness he supposes to be all which constitutes moral obligation; meaning by obligation, not any feeling of moral love, but the influence of happiness as an object of physical desire, and of pain as an object of physical aversion; one or other of which is to follow our obedience or disobedience to the command of the Power who is the supreme dispenser of

¹ Moral and Political Philosophy, book i. chap. vii.

both. The will of God is our rule, he says, but "private happiness is our motive," and therefore our obligation. In short, the inducement or temptation to be virtuous, which is all that constitutes our obligation to be virtuous, is precisely of the same kind with the inducements or temptations to vice, which may be said in like manner to constitute an obligation to be vicious. The only difference is, that a good man—that is to say, a person whom we distinguish by the flattering title of good—is more prudent than those whom we have chosen to denominate wicked. Both act from an obligation which may be said to be moral in one case as much as in the other; since in neither is disinterestedness of affection necessary to virtue; and in both there is that desire of pleasure which is sufficient to constitute an inducement, and therefore, in his acceptance of the word, which he regards as synonymous with inducement, an obligation.

That we have a moral sentiment of obligation, virtue, merit, which is very different from the mere inducements of pleasure near or remote, I surely need not attempt to demonstrate to you, after the remarks already made on the selfish system in general. The doctrine of Paley differs, as you perceive, from the general selfish system, only by the peculiar importance which it very justly gives to everlasting happiness and misery, when compared with the brief pains or pleasures of this life. In the scale of selfish gain, it is a greater quantity of physical enjoyment which it has in view. It is a sager selfishness, but it is not less absolute selfishness which it maintains; and it is therefore subject to all the objections which I urged before at great length, and which it would now therefore be idle to repeat.

One great answer obviously presents itself to all those selfish systems which convert the whole of virtue into prudence; and make the differences of virtue and vice in every respect precisely the same in kind, as those of

speculators in the market of commerce, who have employed their capital more or less advantageously, in the different bargains that have been offered to them. All those systems are, of course, intended to be faithful pictures of our feelings. The virtue which they profess to explain is the virtue which we feel; and if we felt no moral approbation of certain actions, no moral disapprobation of certain other actions, it would be manifestly absurd to speak of virtue or of vice. It is to our consciousness, then, that we must look for determining the fidelity of the picture; and what features does our consciousness exhibit? If two individuals were to expose themselves to the same peril, for the same common friend,—and if we could be made to understand, that the one had no other motive for this apparently generous exposure, than the wish of securing a certain amount of happiness to himself, at some time, either near or remote—on earth, or after he has quitted earth; the other no motive but that of saving a life which was dearer to him than his own; in which case would our feeling of moral approbation more strongly arise? Is it the more selfish of the two whom alone we should consider as the moral hero? or rather, is it not only in thinking of him who forgot every thing but the call of friendship, and the disinterested feeling of duty which prompted him to obey the call, that we should feel any moral approbation whatever? It is precisely in proportion as selfish happiness is absent from the mind of the agent, or is supposed to be absent from it, in any sacrifice which is made for another, that the moral admiration arises; and what, then, can we think of a theory of this very moral admiration, which asserts it to arise only when it does not arise, and not to arise only when it does arise? We should not hesitate long in rejecting a theory of fluidity which should ascribe congelation to an increase of heat, and liquefaction to a diminution of it; and as little ought we to hesitate in rejecting a theory of virtue that supposes the moral approbation which gives birth to our

very notion of virtue, to arise only when the immediate motive of the agent has been the view of his own happiness in this or any other world ; and to be precluded, therefore, by the very generosity of the agent, in every case in which he thought only of the happiness of others which he could increase, of the misery of others which he could relieve.

That part of the system of Dr. Paley, then, which makes the sole motive to virtue the happiness of the agent himself, is false as a picture of the feelings of moral approbation and disapprobation for which it professes to account. The other part of his system of virtue, however, which resolves it into conformity to the will of God, as obeyed from this motive of personal gain, may merit a little fuller investigation.



LECTURE VIII.

EXAMINATION OF THE SELFISH SYSTEM CONCLUDED ; EXAMINATION OF
DR. SMITH'S SYSTEM.

IN the close of my last Lecture, after examining different modifications of the selfish system, I proceeded to consider one form of it, which has not usually been ranked with the others, but which is not less absolutely selfish ; since it supposes the sole motive to virtue to be the view of our own personal advantage ; the only difference being, that instead of fixing its desires on the quantity of pleasure which can be enjoyed in this life, it extends them to the greater quantity of pleasure which may be enjoyed by us in the everlasting life that awaits us ; having still, however, no other motive than the desire of this personal enjoyment, and the corresponding fear of pain, in the actions which may

seem, but only seem, to arise from a disinterested love of God, or a disinterested love of those whom God has committed to our affection.

The greater or less quantity of pleasure, however, which is coveted by us, either in intensity or duration, does not alter the nature of the principle which covets it; if the perception of the means of gratifying our own individual appetite for enjoyment, whether the pleasure be great or slight, near or remote, brief or everlasting, be all which constitutes what is in that case strangely termed moral obligation: and the system of Paley, therefore, to which I particularly alluded,—a system which defines virtue to be “the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, for the sake of everlasting happiness,” and which makes, not the love of God, nor the love of mankind, but this love of everlasting happiness, the motive and sole obligation to the good which otherwise we should have had as little moral desire of producing or promoting, as of producing an equal or greater amount of evil, must be allowed to be, in its very essence, as truly selfish, as if it had defined virtue to be the pursuit of mere wealth, or fame, or of the brief dignities, or still briefer pleasures of this mortal existence.

“There is always understood to be a difference between an act of prudence and an act of duty. Thus, if I distrusted a man who owed me money, I should reckon it an act of prudence to get another bound with him: but I should hardly call it an act of duty. On the other hand, it would be thought a very unusual and loose kind of language to say, that, as I had made such a promise, it was prudent to perform it; or that, as my friend, when he went abroad, placed a box of jewels in my hands, it would be prudent in me to preserve it for him till he returned.”¹

¹ Paley's Moral Philosophy, book ii. chap. iii.

If the most prudent labourer after his own selfish interest, without the slightest regard for the happiness of others, unless as that happiness may be instrumental to his own, be constantly actuated by the same moral motive which influences the most generous lover of mankind, how strange an illusion is all moral sentiment, which views with such different feelings objects that are in every moral respect precisely the same. But it is in our emotions alone that our notions of morality have their rise: and how illusive, therefore, and radically false I should rather say, must be that system which is founded on the absolute similarity of feelings that are recognised by every bosom as absolutely dissimilar.

Though I trust, then, it is sufficiently evident to you, from the results of the long discussion in which we have been engaged, that the moral obligation to virtue is not, as Paley says, the mere inducement of pleasure held out to us by power which we cannot disobey, without losing the pleasure, and encountering pain, but an inducement of a nobler kind, since pleasure, though it may lead us to be virtuous, may surely, as mere pleasure, if there be no essential distinction of it, as pure or impure, right or wrong, often lead us into what we are at present accustomed to denominate vice; and though I shall therefore not repeat, in application to this enlarged selfishness, which extends its interested view through immortality, the objections previously urged against that more limited selfishness which looks only to the surface of the earth, and to the few years in which we are to be moving along it, it may be of importance to make a few remarks on that other part of the doctrine of this celebrated moralist, which makes conformity to the will of God the rule of virtue.

That virtuous actions — those actions which excite in us the feeling of moral approval — are conformable to the will of God, there can be no reason to doubt; since the very

universality of this approval may be regarded as a sort of expression of the divine approbation. As little can we doubt that when the declared will of God is present to our mind, and we think of certain actions as commanded by him, of certain other actions as prohibited by him, and when, in designing or meditating any action, we feel that it is one of those which he has prohibited, there would arise in our mind an instant feeling of disapprobation, that is to say, of vice or demerit, in the performance of the prohibited action. But the question is not, whether it be virtue to conform our will to that of the Deity, when that will is revealed to us, or clearly implied ; for of this there can be no doubt. It is, whether there be not in our nature a principle of moral approbation, from which our feelings of obligation, virtue, merit, flow ; and which operates, not independently of the divine will indeed, for it was the divine will which implanted in us this very principle ; but without the necessary consideration, at the time, of the expression of the divine will, and consequently without any intentional conformity to it or disobedience, or which in our obedience itself, as often as we think of the divine will, is the very principle by which we feel the duty of such conformity. The mother, though she should, at the moment, forget altogether that there is a God in nature, would still turn with moral horror from the thought of murdering the little prattler who is sporting at her knee, and who is not more beautiful to her eye by external charms and graces, than beautiful to her heart by the thousand tendernesses which every day and almost every hour is developing ; while the child, who perhaps has scarcely heard that there is a God, or who at least is ignorant of any will of God, in conformity with which virtue consists, is still in his very ignorance developing those moral feelings which are supposed to be inconsistent with such ignorance, and would not have the same feeling of complacency in repaying the parental caresses with acts of intentional injury, as when he repays

them with expressions of reciprocal love. Of all the mothers who, at this moment, on the earth, are exercised, and virtuously exercised, in maternal duties, around the cradles of their infants, there is perhaps not one who is thinking that God has commanded her to love her offspring, and to perform for them the many offices of love that are necessary for preserving the lives which are so dear to her. The expression of the divine will, indeed, not merely gives us new and nobler duties to perform, it gives a new and nobler delight also to the very duties which our nature prompts; but still there are duties which our nature prompts, and the violation of which is felt as moral wrong, even when God is known and worshipped only as a demon of power, still less benevolent than the very barbarians who howl around his altar in their savage sacrifice.

But for the principle of moral approbation which the divine being has fixed in our nature, the expression of his will would itself have no moral power, whatever physical pain or pleasure it might hold out to our prudent choice. It may be asked, why should we obey the divine command, with as much reason as it may be asked, why should we love our parents or our country? and our only answer to both questions, as far as morality can be said to be concerned, or any feeling different from that of a mere calculation of physical loss or gain, is, that such is our nature; that, in considering the command of God, our greatest of benefactors, or in considering the happiness of our parents, our country, mankind, which it is in our power to promote, we feel that to act in conformity with these, will be followed by our moral approbation; as to act in opposition to them will be followed by inevitable self-reproach. There is a principle of moral discrimination already existing in us, that, even when we conform our conduct to the divine will, is the very principle by which we have felt the duty of this delightful conformity; and if there be no such principle in our nature, by which we discover the duty of

the conformity, it is surely very evident that there can be no such duty to be felt, any more than there can be colour to the blind, or melody to the deaf.

God may be loved by us, or feared by us. He may be loved by us as the source of all our blessings, conferred or promised. He may be feared by us as a being who has the power of inflicting on us eternal anguish. In one of these views, we may, when we obey him, act from gratitude ; in the other, from a sense of the evils which we have to dread in offending him. But if it be a duty of gratitude to obey God, we must previously have been capable of knowing that gratitude is a virtue, as much as we must have been capable of knowing the power of God, before we could have known to fear his awful dominion. We consider the Deity as possessing the highest moral perfection : but in that theological view of morality which acknowledges no mode of estimating excellence beyond that divine command itself, whatever it might have been, these words are absolutely meaningless ; since if, instead of what we now term virtue, he had commanded only what we now term vice, his command must still have been equally holy. If, indeed, the system of Paley, and of other theological moralists, were just, what excellence beyond the excellence of mere power, could we discover in that divine being whom we adore as the supreme goodness, still more than we fear him as the omnipotent ? God has, indeed, commanded certain actions, and it is our virtue to conform our actions to his will ; but if the virtue depend exclusively on obedience to the command, and if there be no peculiar moral excellence in the actions commanded, he must have been equally adorable, though nature had exhibited only appearances of unceasing malevolence in its author ; and every command which he had delivered to his creatures had been only to add new voluntary miseries to the physical miseries which already surrounded them. In the system of Hobbes, which considers law itself, as constituent of moral right, a tyrant, if

his power of enacting law be sufficiently established, is not to be distinguished, in his very tyranny, from the generous sovereign of the free ; because the measure of right is to be found in his will alone. In the system of Paley, in like manner, if virtue be conformity to the will of God, whatever that will may be, and there be no moral measure of the excellence of that will itself, God and the most malignant demon have no moral difference to our heart, but as the one and not the other is the irresistible sovereign of the universe.

The will of God, then, though it is unquestionably the source of virtue, in the most important sense—as it was his will that formed all the principles of our constitution, of which the principle of moral approbation is one—is not the source of virtue in the sense in which that phrase is understood by some theological writers, as limited to the mere declaration of his will, sanctioned by punishment and reward. There is an earlier law of God, which he has written in our hearts ; and the desire of our mere personal happiness or misery, in this or in another world, is truly an object of our approbation, not the source of it ; since the love of mere selfish enjoyment is at least as powerfully the motive to vice, in some cases, as it is in other cases the motive to virtue. We do not merely submit to the will of God as we submit to any power which it is impossible for us to resist. We feel that it would be not imprudence only, but guilt, to wish to disobey it. We seek, in the constitution of our nature, the reason which leads us to approve morally of the duty of this conformity of our will to his beneficent and supreme will ; and we find, in one of the essential principles of our nature, the moral reason which we seek.

After this examination of the various systems, which may be considered as more or less directly opposed to the belief of that principle of moral feeling — the original susceptibility of moral emotion on the contemplation of certain actions — for which I have contended, there is still one

system which deserves to be considered by us, in relation to this belief, not as being subversive of morality, in any one of its essential distinctions, but as appearing to fix morality on a basis that is not sufficiently firm ; with the discovery of the instability of which, therefore, the virtues that are represented as supported on it, might be considered as themselves unstable : as the statue, though it be the image of a god, or the column, though it be a part of a sacred temple, may fall, not because it is not sufficiently cohesive and firm in itself, but because it is too massy for the feeble pedestal on which it has been placed.

The system to which I allude is that which is delivered by Dr. Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*,—a work unquestionably of the first rank in a science which I cannot but regard, as to man, the most interesting of sciences. Profound in thought, it exhibits, even when it is most profound, an example of the graces with which a sage imagination knows how to adorn the simple and majestic form of science, that is severe and cold only to those who are themselves cold and severe, as in those very graces it exhibits, in like manner, an example of the reciprocal embellishment which imagination receives from the sober dignity of truth. In its minor details and illustrations, indeed, it may be considered as presenting a model of philosophic beauty, of which all must acknowledge the power, who are not disqualified by their very nature for the admiration and enjoyment of intellectual excellence ; so dull of understanding as to shrink with a painful consciousness of incapacity at the very appearance of refined analysis, or so dull and cold of heart, as to feel no charm in the delightful varieties of an eloquence that, in the illustration and embellishment of the noblest truths, seems itself to live and harmonize with those noble sentiments which it adorns.

It is chiefly in its minor analyses, however, that I conceive the excellence of this admirable work to consist. Its leading doctrine I am far from admitting. Indeed, it seems

to me as manifestly false, as the greater number of its secondary and minute delineations appear to me faithful to the fine lights, and faint and flying shades, of that moral nature which they represent.

According to Dr. Smith, we do not immediately approve of certain actions, or disapprove of certain other actions, when we have become acquainted with the intention of the agent, and the consequences, beneficial or injurious, of what he has done. All these we might know thoroughly, without a feeling of the slightest approbation or disapprobation. It is necessary, before any moral sentiment arise, that the mind should go through another process, that by which we seem for the time to enter into the feelings of the agent, and of those to whom his action has relation in its consequences, or intended consequences, beneficial or injurious. If, by a process of this kind, on considering all the circumstances in which the agent was placed, we feel a complete sympathy with the passions or calmer emotions that actuated him, and with the gratitude of him who was the object of the action, we approve of the action itself as right, and feel the merit of the agent; our sense of the propriety of the action depending on our sympathy with the agent, our sense of the merit of the agent on our sympathy with the object of the action. If our sympathies be of an opposite kind, we disapprove of the action itself as improper, that is to say, unsuitable to the circumstances, and ascribe not merit but demerit to the agent. In sympathizing with the gratitude of others, we should have regarded the agent as worthy of reward; in sympathizing with the resentment of others, we regard him as worthy of punishment.

Such is the supposed process in estimating the actions of others. When we regard our own conduct we in some measure reverse this process; or rather, by a process still more refined, we imagine others sympathizing with us, and sympathize with their sympathy. We consider how our

conduct would appear to an impartial spectator. We approve of it, if it be that of which we feel that he would approve; we disapprove of it, if it be that which we feel by the experience of our own former emotions, when we have ourselves, in similar circumstances, estimated the actions of others, would excite his disapprobation. We are able to form a judgment as to our own conduct, therefore, because we have previously judged of the moral conduct of others, that is to say, have previously sympathized with the feelings of others; and but for the presence, or supposed presence, of some impartial spectator, as a mirror to represent to us ourselves, we should as little have known the beauty or deformity of our own moral character, as we should have known the beauty or ugliness of our external features without some mirror to reflect them to our eye.

In this brief outline of Dr. Smith's system, I have of course confined myself to the leading doctrine, of which his theory is the developement. If this doctrine of the necessary antecedence of sympathy to our moral approbation or disapprobation be just, the system may be admitted, even though many of his minor illustrations should appear to be false. If this primary doctrine be not just, the system, however ingenious and just in its explanation of many phenomena of the mind, must fail as a theory of our moral sentiments.

To derive our moral sentiments, which are as universal as the actions of mankind that come under our review, from the occasional sympathies, that warm or sadden us with joys and griefs and resentments which are not our own, seems to me, I confess, very nearly the same sort of error as it would be to derive the waters of an ever-flowing stream from the sunshine or shade that may occasionally gleam over it. That we have a principle of social feeling, which, in its rapid participation of the vivid emotions of others, seems to identify us in many cases with the happy

or the sorrowful, the grateful or the indignant, it is impossible to deny. But this sympathy, quick as it truly is to arise, in cases in which the primary feelings are vivid and strongly marked, is not a perpetual accompaniment of every action of every one around us. There must be some vividness of feeling in others, or the display of vividness of feeling, or at least such a situation as usually excites vivid feeling, of some sort, in those who are placed in it, to call the sympathy itself into action. In the number of petty affairs which are hourly before our eyes, what sympathy is felt either with those who are actively or those who are passively concerned, when the agent himself performs his little offices with emotions as slight as those which the objects of his actions reciprocally feel? Yet, in these cases, we are as capable of judging, and approve or disapprove, not with the same liveliness of emotion indeed, but with as accurate estimation of merit or demerit, as when we consider the most heroic sacrifices which the virtuous can make, or the most atrocious crimes of which the sordid and the cruel can be guilty. It is not the absolute vividness of our emotion, however, but its mere correspondence in degree with the emotion of others, which affects our estimates of the propriety of their actions; and it must be remembered, that it is not any greater or less vividness of our sympathetic feeling, but the accuracy of our estimation of merit and demerit, whether great or slight, by the sympathetic feelings supposed, which is the only point in question. There is no theory of our moral distinctions, which supposes that we are to approve equally of all actions that are right, and to disapprove equally of all actions which are wrong; but it is essential to one theory—that theory which we are considering—that there should be no feeling of right or wrong, merit or demerit, and consequently no moral estimation whatever, where there is no previous sympathy in that particular case. The humblest action, therefore, which we denominate right, must have awakened

our sympathy as much as those glorious actions which we are never weary of extolling, in the very commendation of which we think not of the individual only with thankfulness, but with a sort of proud delight of ourselves, of our country, of the common nature of man, as ennobled by the virtue, that, instead of receiving dignity from the homage of our praises, confers dignity on the very gratitude and reverence which offer them. If we were to think only those actions right in which our sympathy is excited, the class of indifferent actions would comprehend the whole life, or nearly the whole life, of almost all the multitude of those around us, and indeed of almost all mankind. A few great virtues and great iniquities would still remain in our system of practical ethics, to be applauded or censured ; but the morality of the common transactions of life, which, though less important in each particular case, is, upon the whole, more important from its extensive diffusion, would disappear altogether as morality, as that which it is right to observe, and wrong to omit, and though it might still be counted useful, would admit of no higher denomination of praise. The supposed necessary universality then, in our moral sentiments, of that which, however frequent, is surely far from universal, would of itself seem to me a sufficient objection to the theory of Dr. Smith.

Even if the sympathy for which he contends were as universal as it is absolutely necessary for the truth of his theory that it should be, it must still be admitted that our sympathy is, in degree at least, one of the most irregular and seemingly capricious of principles in the constitution of the mind ; and on this very account, therefore, not very likely to be the commensurable test or standard of feelings so regular, upon the whole, as our general estimates of right and wrong. But though it would be very easy to show the force of this objection, I hasten from it, and from all objections of this kind, to that which seems to me to be the essential error of the system.

This essential error, the greatest of all possible systematic errors, is no less than the assumption, in every case, of those very moral feelings which are supposed to flow from sympathy, the assumption of them as necessarily existing before that very sympathy in which they are said to originate.

Let us allow, then, every thing which we can suppose it possible for the author of the theory to have claimed; let us admit that the sympathy of which he speaks, instead of being limited to a few cases of vivid feeling, is as universal as he contends; that it is as little variable in kind, or in degree, as our notions of right and wrong; and, in short, that it is in perfect accordance with our moral sentiments; even though, with all these admissions, we were to admit also the very process which Dr. Smith supposes to take place exactly in the manner which he supposes, it would be very evident, that still, after so many important concessions, the moral sentiments could not be regarded as having their source in the sympathy, but as preceding it; or, if no moral sentiments of any kind preceded it, the sympathy itself could not afford them more than a mirror, which reflects to us, from the opposite landscape, the sunny hill, the rock, and the trees, gleaming through the spray of the waterfall, could of itself, without any external light, produce all that beautiful variety of colours, with which it delights our vision, as if it were the very scene on which we have loved to gaze.

Let us consider, then, with a little nicer analysis, the process of which Dr. Smith speaks, admitting the sympathy for which he contends, and admitting it in the fullest extent which can be conceived necessary to his theory.

In this theory, as you have seen, he has separated our feeling of the propriety or impropriety of the action from our feeling of the merit or demerit of the agent, ascribing the one to our sympathy with the emotions of the agent in

the circumstances in which he was placed, the other to our sympathy with the gratitude or resentment of those who have been affected by the action. I have already endeavoured to show you, that we have only one feeling of approvableness, arising on the contemplation of an action, which, as variously referred to the agent or to the action considered abstractly, is at once the felt propriety of the action and the felt merit of the agent. Indeed, it seems to me as absurd to suppose that we can conceive an action to be wrong, in the moral sense of that word, without any notion of the demerit of the voluntary agent, or conceive the demerit of the voluntary agent, without any notion of the impropriety of his action, as it would be to suppose that we can imagine a circle without a centre, or a centre without a circle. But let us adopt, without objection, the supposed analysis which Dr. Smith has made of our moral sentiments, and admit that, in the constitution of these, there are two distinct feelings that give occasion to corresponding moral notions of propriety and merit, which one of these feelings alone could not have produced; in short, let us admit, that we might have conceived an action to be morally wrong, without any demerit on the part of the agent, or have conceived the greatest demerit on his part, without any moral impropriety in his action.

The first supposed sympathy which we have to consider, is that which is said to give occasion to our moral estimates of actions as proper or improper, without regard to the merit or demerit of the agent, that are felt by us only through the medium of another sympathy.

This notion of moral propriety or impropriety, we are told, could not have been produced in us by the most attentive consideration of the action, and of all its circumstances; another process must intervene. We feel the propriety of the action, only because we sympathize with the agent. We make his circumstances our own, and our passion being in

unison with his, we regard it as suitable to the circumstances, and therefore as morally proper.

If we have, indeed, previous notions of moral right and wrong, or some other source in which they may be found, this belief of the propriety of certain feelings that accord with ours, might be sufficiently intelligible; but the most complete sympathy of feelings, the most exact accordancy, is not sufficient to constitute or give rise to the moral sentiments of which we are treating; when there is nothing more than a sympathy of feelings, without that previous moral sentiment, which, in Dr. Smith's system, we must always tacitly presuppose. In the very striking emotions of taste, for example, we may feel, on the perusal of the same poem, the performance of the same musical air, the sight of the same picture, or statue, a rapture or disgust, accordant with the rapture or disgust expressed by another reader, or listener, or spectator; a sympathy far more complete than takes place in our consideration of the circumstances in which he may have had to regulate his conduct in any of the common affairs of life; in which our secondary emotion, if it be at all excited, is excited but faintly. If mere accordance of emotion, then, imply the feeling of moral excellence of any sort, we should certainly feel a moral regard for all whose taste coincides with ours; yet, however gratifying the sympathy in such a case may be, we do not feel, in consequence of this sympathy, any morality in the taste that is most exactly accordant with our own. There is an agreement of emotions, a sort of physical suitableness that is felt by us of the emotions, as effects to the works of art as causes, but nothing more; and if we had not a principle of moral approbation, by which, independently of sympathy, and previously to it, we regard actions as right, the most exact sympathy of passions would, in like manner, have been a proof to us of an agreement of feelings, but of nothing more. It proves to us more, because the emotions, which we compare with our

own, are recognised by us as moral feelings, independently of the mere agreement. We do not merely share the sentiments of the agent, but we share his moral sentiments, the recognition of which, as moral sentiments, has preceded our very sympathy.

Why is it that we regard emotions which do not harmonize with our own, not merely as unlike to ours, which is one view of them, but as morally improper, which is a very different view of them? It must surely be, because we regard our own emotions which differ from them as morally proper; and, if we regard our own emotions as proper, before we can judge the emotions which do not harmonize with them to be improper on that account, what influence can the supposed sympathy and comparison have had, in giving birth to that moral sentiment which preceded the comparison? They show us only feelings that differ from ours, and that are improper because ours are proper. The sympathy, therefore, on which the feeling of propriety is said to depend, assumes the previous belief of that very propriety; or, if there be no previous belief of the moral suitableness of our own emotions, there can be no reason, from the mere dissonance of other emotions with ours, to regard these dissonant emotions as morally unsuitable to the circumstances in which they have arisen. We may, perhaps, conceive them to be physically unsuitable, in the same manner as we regard the taste as erroneous, which approves of poetry as sublime that to us appears bombastic or mean; but we can as little feel any moral regard in the one case as in the other, unless we have previously distinguished the one set of emotions as moral emotions, the other set as emotions of taste.

With respect to the former of the two sympathies, then, which Dr. Smith regards as essential to our moral sentiments, the sympathy from which he supposes us to derive our notions of actions, as right or wrong, proper or improper, — that is to say, as morally suitable or unsuit-

able to the circumstances in which the action takes place, we have seen that it assumes, as independent of the sympathy, the very feelings to which the sympathy is said to give rise.

Let us next consider the latter of the two sympathies, to which we are said to owe our notion of merit or demerit in the agent, as distinct from the propriety or impropriety of his action.

These sentiments of merit or demerit arise, we are told, not from any direct consideration of the agent and of the circumstances of his action, but from our sympathy with the gratitude or resentment of those who have derived benefit or injury, or at least whom he is supposed to have wished to derive benefit or injury, from that good or evil which he purposed. If, on considering the circumstances of the case, we feel that our emotions of this sort would, in a similar situation, harmonize with theirs, we regard the agent in the same light in which they regard him, as worthy of reward in the one case, or of punishment in the other, that is to say, as having moral merit or demerit.

If our sense of merit were confined to cases in which the action had a direct relation to others, with whose gratitude we might be supposed to sympathize, this theory of merit would at least be more distinctly conceivable. But what are we to think of cases in which the action begins and terminates, without a thought of the happiness of others, in the amelioration of the individual himself; of sacrifices resolutely but silently made to the mere sense of duty; the voluntary relinquishment of luxurious indulgences; the struggle, and at last the victory over appetites and passions that are felt to be inconsistent with the sanctity of virtue; and over habits, still more difficult to be subdued than the very appetites or passions which may have given them their power? In such cases, our sense of the merit of the victor in this noble strife, when we do not think of the

gratitude of a single individual, because there is, in truth, no gratitude of which to think, is, notwithstanding, as vivid as if we had around us whole families and tribes of the grateful to excite our sympathy, and to continue to harmonize with it. The world, indeed, the great community of individuals, it may be said, is truly benefited by every increase of virtue in any one of the individuals who compose it; and it may be possible, in this way, to invent some species of gratitude of the whole multitude of mankind, that may be supposed to awake our sympathy, and thus to make us feel a merit even in such cases, which otherwise we should not have felt. But, though it may be possible for us, with due care and effort of thought, to invent this abstract or remote gratitude with which ours may be supposed to harmonize, can it be imagined by any one but the most obstinate defender of a system, that this strange sympathy, of which no one perhaps has been conscious in any case, truly and constantly takes place whenever we thus approve? that we do not feel any merit whatever in the voluntary privations which virtue makes, till we have previously excited ourselves to admire them, by reflecting on a grateful world? Such a reflex thankfulness, if it occur at all, does not occur to one of many thousands, who require, for their instant perception of the merit, only the knowledge of the sacrifices of present enjoyment which have been made, and of the pure motives which led to the sacrifices. It is not only the Hercules who freed the world from robbers and monsters that we admire: we admire, at least as much, in the beautiful ancient allegory, the same moral hero when he resisted the charms and the solicitations of Pleasure herself. The choice of Hercules, indeed, is fabulous. But the choice which he is fabled to have made, has been the choice of the virtuous of every age; and, in every age, the sacrifices internally and silently made to duty and conscience, have been ranked in merit with the sacrifices which had for their direct object

the happiness of others, and for their immediate reward the gratitude of the happy. Why is it that we look with so much honour on the martyr in those early ages of persecution, which, collecting around the victim every instrument of torture, required of him only a few grains of incense to be thrown before a statue, more noble, indeed, than the imperial murderer whom it represented, but still only a statue, the effigy of a being of human form, who, under the purple which clothed him, with the diadem and the sceptre and the altar, far from being a god, was himself one of the lowest of the things which God had made! When placed thus between idolatry and every form of bodily anguish, with life and guilt before him, and death and innocence, the hero of a pure faith looked fearlessly on the cross or on the stake, and calmly and without wrath on the statue which he refused to worship, and on all the ready ministers of cruelty, that were rejoicing in the new work which they had to perform, and the new amusement which they were to give to the impatient crowd,—do we feel that there was no merit in the magnanimity, because we cannot readily discover some gratitude which we may participate? or, if we do feel any merit, is it only on account of some gratitude which we have at last succeeded in discovering? We do not think of any thankfulness of man. We think only of God and virtue, and of the heroic sufferer, to whom God and virtue were all, and the suffering of such a moment nothing.

That our feeling of merit, then, is not a reflected gratitude, but arises from the direct contemplation of the meritorious action, might, if any proof were necessary, appear sufficiently evident from the equal readiness of this feeling to arise in cases in which it would be difficult to discover any gratitude with which we can be supposed to sympathize, and in which the individual himself, and the circumstances of his action, are all that is before us. But though this, and every other objection to Dr. Smith's theory of our

feeling of merit, were to be abandoned, there would still remain the great objection, that the sympathy which he supposes in this case, as in that formerly examined by us, proceeds on the existence of that very moral sentiment which it is stated by him to produce.

We discover the merit of the agent in any case, it is said, by that sympathetic tendency of our nature, in consequence of which, on considering any particular action, we place ourselves in the situation of those who are benefited by the action, when, if we feel an emotion of gratitude like theirs, we of course consider the agent himself as meritorious, worthy of the reward of which they consider him to be worthy; and, in like manner, on considering any action of injustice or malevolence, we feel the demerit of the agent by sympathizing with the resentment of those whom the action has injured.

Such is the process asserted. But what is it that is truly supposed in this process, as distinguishing the sympathetic and secondary feelings, from the primary feelings of those who were directly concerned?

We place ourselves in the situation of others, or, rather, without willing it, or knowing the change till it is produced, we feel ourselves, by some sudden illusion, as if placed in their situation. In this imaginary sameness of circumstances we have feelings similar to theirs. They view their benefactor as worthy of reward. We, therefore, considering for the moment the benefit as if conferred on us, regard him likewise as worthy of reward: or if they consider him worthy of punishment, we too consider him worthy of punishment. Their gratitude or resentment is founded on real benefit received, or real injury. Our gratitude or resentment is founded on the illusive momentary belief of benefit or injury. But this difference of reality and illusion in the circumstances which give occasion to them, is the only difference of the feelings; unless, indeed, that as the illusion cannot be of very long continuance, and is,

probably, even while it lasts, less powerful than the reality, our sympathetic feelings, however similar in kind, may be supposed to be weaker in degree.

The effect of the sympathy, then, being only to transfuse into our breasts the gratitude or resentment of those who have been immediately benefited or injured by any generous or malevolent action, if the original gratitude imply belief of merit in the object of the gratitude, and the original resentment imply belief of demerit in its object, we may, by our sympathy with these direct original feelings, be impressed with similar belief of merit or demerit. But, in this case, it is equally evident that if our reflex gratitude and resentment involve notions of merit and demerit, the original gratitude and resentment which we feel by reflection must in like manner have involved them; and must even have involved them with more vivid feeling, since the difference of vividness was the chief or only circumstance of difference in the direct and the sympathetic emotions. The sympathy, then, to which we are supposed to owe our moral sentiments of merit and demerit, presupposes those very sentiments; since the feelings which arise in us by sympathy, only from the illusion by which we place ourselves in the situation of others, must, in those who were truly in that very situation, have arisen directly with at least equal power. It is some previous gratitude with which we sympathize; it is some previous resentment with which we sympathize; and merit is said to be only that worthiness of reward which the gratitude itself implies, and demerit that worthiness of punishment which is implied in the primary resentment. If the feeling of gratitude implied no notion of any relation of worthiness, which our benefactor's generosity bears to the reward which we wish that we were capable of bestowing on him, and our resentment, in like manner, implied no notion of a similar relation of the injustice or cruelty of him who has injured us, to that punishment of his offence which we wish and

anticipate, we might then, indeed, be obliged to seek some other source of these felt relations. But if the actual gratitude or resentment of those who have profited or suffered imply no feelings of merit or demerit, we may be certain, at least, that in whatever source we are to strive to discover these feelings, it is not in the mere reflection of a fainter gratitude or resentment that we can hope to find them.

After admitting to Dr. Smith, then, every thing which he could be supposed to claim, or even to wish to claim, with respect to the universality, the steadiness, and the vividness of our sympathetic feelings, we have seen, that in both the sympathies which he supposes to take place, that from which we are said to derive our moral sentiments of the propriety or impropriety of actions, and that from which we are said, in like manner, to derive our moral sentiments of merit or demerit in the agent, the process to which he ascribes the origin of these moral sentiments cannot even be understood without the belief of their previous existence. The feelings with which we sympathize are themselves moral feelings or sentiments ; or, if they are not moral feelings, the reflection of them from a thousand breasts cannot alter their nature.

LECTURE IX.

EXAMINATION OF DR. SMITH'S SYSTEM CONCLUDED ; RECAPITULATION
OF THE DOCTRINES OF MORAL APPROBATION.

My last Lecture was chiefly employed in considering a theory of our moral sentiments which has been stated and defended with great eloquence by one of the profoundest philosophers whom our country and our science can boast ;

a theory which founds our moral sentiments, not on the direct contemplation of the actions which we term virtuous, but on a sympathy which it is impossible for us not to feel, with the emotions of the agent in the circumstances in which he has been placed, and with the emotions also of those to whom his actions have been productive of benefit or injury; our direct sympathy with the agent giving rise to our notion of the propriety of his action, our indirect sympathy with those whom his actions have benefited or injured giving rise to our notions of merit or demerit in the agent himself. Both these supposed sympathies I examined with a more minute review than that to which they have usually been submitted; and in both cases we found, that even though many other strong objections to which the theory is liable were abandoned, and though the process for which the theorist contends were allowed to take place to the fullest extent to which he contends for it, his system would still be liable to the insuperable objection, that the moral sentiments which he ascribes to our secondary feelings of mere sympathy, are assumed as previously existing in those original emotions with which the secondary feelings are said to be in unison. If those to whom an action has directly related are incapable of discovering, by the longest and minutest examination of it, however much they may have been benefited by it or injured, and intentionally benefited or injured, any traces of right or wrong, merit or demerit, in the performer of the action, those whose sympathy consists merely in an illusory participation of the same interest, cannot surely derive, from the fainter reflex feelings, that moral knowledge which even the more vivid primary emotions were incapable of affording, any more than we can be supposed to acquire, from the most faithful echo, important truths that were never uttered by the voices which it reflects. ¶The utmost influence of the liveliest sympathy can be only to render the momentary feelings the same, as if the identity of situation with the object of

the sympathy were not illusive, but real; and what it would be impossible for the mind to feel, if really existing in the circumstances supposed, it must be impossible for it also to feel, when it believes itself to exist in them, and is affected in the same manner, as if truly that very mind with whose emotions it sympathizes.

If, indeed, we had previously any moral notions of actions as right or wrong, we might very easily judge of the propriety or impropriety of the sentiments of others, according as our own do or do not sympathize with them; and it is this previous feeling of propriety or impropriety which Dr. Smith tacitly assumes, even in contending for the exclusive influence of the sympathy, as itself the original source of every moral sentiment. The sentiments of others could not fail, indeed, in that case, to appear to us proper, if they coincided with sentiments which we had before, in our own mind, recognised as proper, or morally suitable to the circumstances; improper if they differed from these. But if we have no previous moral notions whatever, the most exact sympathy of feelings can tell us only that our feelings are similar to the feelings of some other person, which they may be as much when they are vicious as when they are virtuous, or when they are neither virtuous nor vicious; the most complete dissonance, in like manner, can tell us only that our feelings are not similar to those of some other person. When another calls scarlet or green what we have previously felt to be scarlet or green, we think that his vision and ours agree; but we presuppose, in him as in ourselves, that visual sensibility which distinguished the colours, and we do not consider him an object of moral regard, because his vision coincides with ours. When he is affected with a delightful emotion similar to ours, on the contemplation of a work of art, we acknowledge mentally, and are pleased perhaps with this coincidence of taste. But the coincidence does not seem to us to be that which constitutes the emotion of taste. On the contrary,

it presupposes in both an independent susceptibility of these emotions, by which we should, individually, have admired what is beautiful, and distinguished from it what is ugly, though no one had been present with us to participate our sentiments. When, in like manner, we admire, with vivid approbation, some generous action, —that is to say, according to Dr. Smith's language, when we sympathize with the feelings of any one in the circumstances in which he has been placed, we have a coincidence of feelings, indeed, as exact, though probably not more exact, than in a case of simple vision or admiration of some work of art, in which no moral sentiment was felt ; and this very coincidence, in like manner, presupposes a capacity of distinguishing and admiring what is right, without which there would have been a similarity of feelings and nothing more, precisely as in the other cases. It is not a mere coincidence of feeling, however, which we recognise in our moral sentiments, like that which we recognise in the most exact coincidence of taste. We feel not merely that another has acted as we should have done, and that his motives, in similar circumstances, have been similar to ours. We feel that, in acting as he has done, he has acted properly ; because, independently of the sympathy which merely gives us feelings to measure with our own, as we might measure with our own any other species of feelings, we are impressed with the propriety of the sentiments, according to which we trust that we should ourselves have acted ; so thoroughly impressed with these previous distinctions of right and wrong, that, in the opposite case of some act of atrocious delinquency, no sympathy in vice of one villain with another can make the common crime seem a virtue in the eyes of his accomplice, who is actuated by similar motives, and, therefore, by similar feelings, in a sympathy of the finest unison, when he adds his arm to the rapine and afterwards to the murder which is to conceal and to consummate the guilt.

The moral sentiments which we have as yet considered, are those which relate to the conduct and feelings of others. The same inconsistency which we found in the theory of these, is to be found, as might be supposed, in the application of the principle to the other species of supposed sympathy which we have still to consider, in the sentiments which we form of our own moral conduct. That we should be capable, indeed, of forming a moral estimate of our own actions, from the direct contemplation of the circumstances in which we may have been placed, and of the good or evil which we may have intentionally produced, would evidently be subversive of the whole theory of sympathy; since, with the same knowledge of circumstances and of intention, if we could form any moral judgment of our own actions, we might be equally capable of forming some moral judgment of the actions of others. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, for Dr. Smith to maintain, that we have no power of judging of our own actions directly,—that, knowing the choice which we have made, and all the circumstances which led to our choice, and all the consequences of benefit or injury to individuals and to the world, which our choice may have produced, it is yet absolutely impossible for us to distinguish, without the aid of the real or supposed sentiments of others, any difference of propriety or impropriety, right or wrong, merit or demerit, or whatever other names we may use to express the differences of vice and virtue; though our vice had been the atrocious fury of plunging a dagger in the heart of her who had been our happiness in many connubial years, and who was slumbering beside us on the same pillow, in the calmness of unsuspecting love; or our virtue the clemency of drawing back from the bosom of the assassin whom we had laid at our feet, the dagger which we had wrenched from his murderous hand. Even of actions so different as these, it would be absolutely impossible for us, we are told, to form any moral distinction, if we were to look on them only with our own eyes,

and measure them by the feelings of our own heart. Before the one can appear to us less virtuous than the other, we must imagine some witnesses or hearers of what has been done, and sympathize with their sympathy. Such is the process which Dr. Smith believes to take place. But surely, if our original feelings, on the consideration of all the circumstances of an action, involve no notion of right or wrong, the sympathy with our feelings, or our sympathy with that sympathy, or even an infinite series of reciprocal sympathies, if these should be thought necessary, cannot afford the moral notions of which the original feelings, themselves more vivid, afforded no elements. If the impartial spectator be able to discover merit or demerit, by making our case his own, and becoming conscious as it were of our feelings; our feelings, which he thus makes his own, must speak to us with the same voice of moral instruction with which, during his temporary illusion, they speak to him. If, considering our action and all its consequences, we cannot discover any merit or demerit, they, considering our action in all its circumstances as theirs, must be alike insensible of any merit or demerit: or, if they have feelings essentially different from ours, they have not made our case their own, and what is misnamed sympathy has not been sympathy. Unless we presuppose, as I before said, on their part some moral notions of what is right or wrong, meritorious or worthy of punishment, by which they may measure our conduct and feelings, all the knowledge which the most complete sympathy can afford, is merely that they have certain feelings, that we have had certain feelings, and that these feelings are similar to each other, as our feelings have coincided before in various other emotions, perceptions, judgments that involved or suggested no moral notion whatever.

We have now then considered, both in its relation to our sentiments of our own moral conduct, and in its relation to our sentiments of the conduct of others, the very cele-

brated theory of Dr. Smith ; a theory which I cannot but regard as involving in morals the same error that would be involved in a theory of the source of light, if an optician, after showing us many ingenious contrivances, by which an image of some beautiful form may be made to pass from one visible place to another, were to contend that all the magnificent radiations of that more than ethereal splendour which does not merely adorn the day, but constitutes the day, had their primary origin in reflection, when reflection itself implies, and cannot be understood but as implying, the previous incidence, and therefore the previous existence of the light which is reflected. A mirror presents to us a fainter copy of external things ; but it is a copy which it presents. We are in like manner, to each other, mirrors that reflect from breast to breast joy, sorrow, indignation, and all the vivid emotions of which the individual mind is susceptible ; but though, as mirrors, we mutually give and receive emotions, these emotions must have been felt before they could be communicated. To ascribe original moral feelings to this mental reflection, is truly, then, as much an error, in the theory of morality, as the doctrine of the production of light by reflection without the previous incidence of light, would be an error in the theory of catoptrics.

The argument, after the fuller views of it which I have given, may be recapitulated in very brief compass.

There are only two senses in which sympathy can be understood ; one having immediate relation to the feelings, the other to the situation, of him with whom we are said to sympathize. We partake his emotions directly, as if by instant contagion ; or we partake them indirectly, by first imagining ourselves in the circumstances in which he is placed ; the emotion, in this latter case, being similar merely because the situation, in which we imagine ourselves for the moment, is similar, and arising in us when the situation is imagined to be ours, precisely in the same

manner, and according to the same principles, as it arose in the mind of him who truly existed in the circumstances in which our imagination only has placed us. In either case it is equally evident, that sympathy cannot be the source of any additional knowledge ; it only gives a wider diffusion to feelings that previously exist, or that might have previously existed. If it reflect to us the very emotions of others, as if by contagion, without any intervening influence of imagination on our part, it reflects feelings that have been directly excited in them, the primary subjects of the feelings, by their real situation ; and which they would not the less have had, though no one had been present to sympathize with them, or even though the tendency to sympathy had not formed a part of the mental constitution. If, on the other hand, sympathy do not reflect to us the very emotions of others, but make us first enter, by a sort of spiritual transmigration, into their situation, and thus indirectly impress us with their feelings ; it still, in making their situation ours, while the illusion lasts, excites in us only the feelings which we should have had, if the situation had been really ours ; and which the same tendencies to emotion that produce them now would then have produced, though no sympathy whatever had been concerned in the process. All which is peculiar to the sympathy is, that instead of one mind only, affected with certain feelings, there are two minds affected with certain feelings, and a recognition of the similarity of these feelings ; a similarity which, far from being confined to our moral emotions, may occur as readily and as frequently in every other feeling of which the mind is susceptible. What produces the moral notions, therefore, must evidently be something more than a recognition of similarity of feeling which is thus common to feelings of every class. There must be an independent capacity of moral emotion, in consequence of which we judge those sentiments of conduct to be right which coincide with sentiments of

conduct previously recognised as right, or the sentiments of others to be improper, because they are not in unison with those which we previously distinguished as proper. Sympathy, then, may be the diffuser of moral sentiments, as of various other feelings; but if no moral sentiments exist previously to our sympathy, our sympathy itself cannot give rise to them.

Such, in outline, is the great objection to Dr. Smith's theory, as a theory of our moral sentiments. It professes to explain, by the intervention of sympathy, feelings which must have existed previously to the sympathy, or at least, without the capacity of which, as original feelings, in the real circumstances supposed, the illusive reality which sympathy produces would have been incapable of developing them. It is on a mere assumption then, or rather on an inconsistency still more illogical than a mere assumption, that the great doctrine of his system is founded; yet notwithstanding this essential defect, which might seem to you inconsistent with the praise that was given when I entered on the examination of it, the work of Dr. Smith is, without all question, one of the most interesting works, perhaps I should have said the most interesting work, in moral science. It is valuable, however, as I before remarked, not for the leading doctrine of which we have seen the futility, but for the minor theories which are adduced in illustration of it, for the refined analysis which it exhibits in many of these details, and for an eloquence which, adapting itself to all the temporary varieties of its subject, familiar with a sort of majestic grace, and simple even in its magnificence, can play amid the little decencies and proprieties of common life, or rise to all the dignity of that sublime and celestial virtue which it seems to bring from heaven indeed, but to bring down gently and humbly to the humble bosom of man.

That his own penetrating mind should not have discovered the inconsistencies that are involved in his theory, and that

these should not have readily occurred to the many philosophic readers and admirers of his work, may in part have arisen, as many other seeming wonders of the kind have arisen, from the ambiguities of language. The meaning of the important word sympathy is not sufficiently definite, so as to present always one clear notion to the mind. It is generally employed, indeed, to signify a mere participation of the feelings of others ; but it is also frequently used as significant of approbation itself. To say that we sympathize with any one in what he has felt or done, means often that we thoroughly approve of his feelings ; and in consequence of this occasional use of the term as synonymous with approbation, the theory which would identify all our moral approbation with sympathy, was, I cannot but think, more readily admitted, both by its author, and by those who have followed him ; since what was not true of sympathy, in its strict philosophic sense, was yet true of it in its mixed popular sense. Indeed, if the word had been always strictly confined to its two accurate meanings, as significant either of the mere direct participation of feelings previously existing, or of the indirect participation of them in consequence of the illusive belief of similarity of circumstances, it seems to me as little possible that any one should have thought of ascribing to sympathy original feelings, as, in the analogous cases which I before instanced, of ascribing to an echo the original utterance of the voices which it sends to our ear, or the production of the colours which it sends to our eye to the mirror which has only received and reflected them.

Of all the principles of our mixed nature, sympathy is perhaps one of the most irregular, varying not in different individuals only, but even in the same individual in different hours or different minutes of the same day, and varying, not with slight differences, but with differences of promptness and liveliness, with which only feelings the

most capricious could be commensurable. If our virtue and vice, therefore, or our views of actions as right or wrong, varied with our sympathy, we might be virtuous at morning, vicious at noon, and virtuous again at night, without any change in the circumstances of our action, except in our greater or less tendency to vividness of sympathy, or to the expectation of more or less vivid sympathies in others. How absurd and impertinent seems to us, in our serious hours, the mirth that in more careless moments would have won from us not our smile only, but our full sympathy of equal laughter; and how dull, when our own mind is sportive, seems to us the gravity of the sad and serious, of the venerable moralizers on years that are long passed, and years that are present,—to whose chair, under the influence of any sorrow that depressed us, we loved to draw our own, while we felt a sort of comfort as we listened to them, in the slow and tranquil tone, and the gentle solemnity of their fixed but placid features. What is true of our sympathy with mere mirth or sadness, is true of every other species of sympathy. Original temperament, habit, the slightest accident of good or bad fortune, may modify in no slight degree the readiness, or at least the liveliness, of moral sympathy with which we should have entered into the feelings of others, into their gratitude or anger, or common love or hate; and if, therefore, our estimate of the propriety or impropriety of actions had been altogether dependent on the force of our mere sympathetic emotion, it would not have been very wonderful if the greater number of mankind had regarded the very propriety or impropriety, as not less accidental than the sympathies from which they flowed.

Having now, then, examined all the systems of philosophers which may be considered as more or less directly opposed to the simple view which I gave you of our moral constitution, in which our notions of moral obligation, virtue, merit, were traced to a single feeling of the mind,

and the susceptibility of this feeling found to be as truly original in the mind as any of its other powers or susceptibilities—its capacity, for example, of memory, judgment, love, hate, hope, fear—I flatter myself, that the evident inadequacy of every system which professes to account for the moral phenomena, without this original distinctive principle, will be regarded as at least a strong corroboration of the positive evidence of the theory which has been submitted to you. The review in which we have been engaged may, therefore, I hope, be of double value, both as giving you a sketch of the opinions of the most eminent philosophers who have written on this most interesting subject, and an exposition of the errors of those opinions, which in many instances it requires considerable minuteness of analysis to detect, and as enabling you, at the same time, better to appreciate the truth of those original distinctions of moral good and evil, the belief of which seems to me as just in philosophy as it is salutary in its practical tendencies, and delightful to the heart that loves virtue; and that, feeling in itself all the blessings which virtue diffuses, perceives with joy that the principle which gives to life all its happiness, is a principle that does not depend for its development on accidents of worldly station, or time or place, but in all regions, and ages, and circumstances of fortune, is coeval with the race of man, and present with its joys or consolations, which it is always ready to offer to our very wishes, wherever a human being exists.

The review itself, however—important as it may have been in its relation to the history of moral science, and to the great truths which it is the object of moral science to develop and illustrate—has presented to your attention so many explanations, or rather so many attempted explanations, of the same moral phenomena, that the rapid succession of these different opinions may have tended, perhaps—at least in the minds of such of you as are not accustomed to consider together and compare many dis-

cordant systems—to perplex and obscure the notions which you had derived from the view of the subject as it was originally presented to you. It may be of advantage, therefore, to take a short retrospect of our original speculation.

In surveying either our own conduct, or the conduct of others, we do not regard the actions that come under our review as merely useful or hurtful, in the same manner as we regard inanimate things, or parts even of our living mental constitution, that are independent of our will. There is a peculiar set of emotions, to which the actions of voluntary agents in certain circumstances give rise, that are the source of our moral sentiments, or rather which are themselves our moral sentiments, when considered in reference to the actions that excite them. To these emotions we give the name of moral approbation or moral disapprobation, feelings that are of various degrees of vividness as the actions which we consider are various. The single principle on which these feelings depend, is the source of all our moral notions; one feeling of approbation, as variously regarded in time, being all which is truly meant when we speak of moral obligation, virtue, merit, that, in the works of ethical writers, are commonly treated as objects of distinct inquiry; and that, in consequence of the distinct inquiries to which they have led, and the vain attempts to discover essential differences where none truly exist, have occasioned so much confusion of thought and verbal tautology as to throw a sort of darkness on morality itself. Instead, then, of inquiring first, what it is which constitutes virtue, and then what it is which constitutes merit, and then what it is which constitutes our moral obligation to do what we have seen to be right and meritorious, we found that one inquiry alone was necessary—what actions excite in us, when contemplated, a certain vivid feeling—since this approving sentiment alone, in its various references, is all which we seek in these different

verbal inquiries. If a particular action be meditated by us, and we feel, on considering it, that it is one of those which, if performed by us, will be followed in our own mind by the painful feeling of self-reproach, and in the minds of others by similar disapprobation; if a different action be meditated by us, and we feel that our performance of it would be followed in our own mind and the minds of others by an opposite emotion of approbation, this view of the moral emotions that are consequences of the actions is that which I consider as forming what is termed moral obligation, the moral inducement which we feel to the performance of certain actions, or to abstinence from certain other actions. We are virtuous if we act in conformity with this view of moral obligation; we are vicious if we act in opposition to it; virtuous and vicious meaning nothing more than the intentional performance of actions that excite, when contemplated, the moral emotions. Our action, in the one case, we term morally right, in the other case morally wrong; right and wrong, like virtue and vice, being only words that express briefly the actions which are attended with the feeling of moral approbation in the one case, of moral disapprobation in the other case. When we speak of the merit of any one, or of his demerit, we do not suppose any thing to be added to the virtue or vice; we only express, in other words, the fact, that he has performed the action which it was virtuous or vicious to perform; the action which, as contemplated by us, excites our approval, or the emotion that is opposite to that of approval. Moral obligation, virtue, vice, right, wrong, merit, demerit, and whatever other words may be synonymous with these, all denote then, as you perceive, relations to one simple feeling of the mind, the distinctive sentiment of moral approbation or disapprobation, which arises on the contemplation of certain actions; and which seems itself to be various, only because the action of which we speak or think, meditated, willed, or already performed, is variously regarded by us,

in time, as future, present, past. There are, in short, certain actions which cannot be contemplated without the instant feeling of approval, and which may therefore be denominated morally right. To feel this character of approvableness in an action which we have not yet performed, and are only meditating on it as future, is to feel the moral obligation or moral inducement to perform it; when we think of the action in the moment of volition, we term the voluntary performance of it virtue; when we think of the action as already performed, we denominate it merit; in all which cases, if we analyze our moral sentiment, we cannot fail to discern, that it is one constant feeling of moral approval, with which we have been impressed, that is varied only by the difference of the time at which we regard the action as future, immediate, or past.

A great part of the confusion which has prevailed in the theory of morals, has arisen, I have little doubt, from indistinctness of conception with respect to the identity or the difference of these moral notions of obligation, virtue, merit. Much of the confusion also, I have as little doubt, has arisen from the abuse of one very simple abstraction—that by which we consider an action as stripped of circumstances peculiar to an individual agent, and forming, as it were, something of itself, which could be an object of moral regard, independently of the agent. We thus learn to speak of actions that are absolutely right and relatively wrong, or absolutely wrong and relatively right; that is to say, of actions which are right when the agent, with his particular views, is wrong; and of agents that continue as meritorious as before, when their actions, in ordinary circumstances, would have been ranked in some degree of delinquency. Convenient as these distinctions may verbally have been in some cases, where brevity was the only advantage desired, they have had an injurious tendency in other more important respects, by leading the inconsiderate to suppose, that of actions which are thus at once right and wrong, the

morality cannot be very stable and definite. I was careful, therefore, to point out to you the nature of the abstraction, and the futility of any distinction more than what is purely verbal, of absolute and relative rectitude. What is absolutely right is relatively right, what is relatively right is absolutely right. An action cannot excite feelings different from those which an agent excites, for it is itself the agent, or it is nothing. It is the brief expression of some agent, real or supposed, placed in certain circumstances, willing and producing certain effects; and when an action, which in one set of circumstances is right, is said to be wrong in other circumstances, the action of which we speak, in the new circumstances supposed, is truly, as I showed you, a different action, in the only sense in which an action has any meaning, as significant of a living being having certain definite views, and producing certain definite effects. A clear view of this definition of an action, as uniformly comprehending in it the notion of some agent, without whom it would be nothing — though, but for the general misconception on the subject, it would seem to me so obvious as scarcely to require to be pointed out—is, in consequence of that general misconception, one of the most important views in the philosophy of morals which you can make familiar to your mind. It is no small progress in Ethics, as in Physics, to have learned to distinguish accurately abstractions from realities, to know that an action is only another name for an agent in certain circumstances; virtue, vice, only briefer expressions of an agent virtuous or vicious, that is to say, of an agent performing actions of which we and mankind in general approve or disapprove. Indeed, I scarcely know a single ethical writer, to whose mind the nature of these and other similar abstractions has been duly present, and who does not sometimes think, or at least speak, of virtue and vice, as beings that have certain properties, independently of all the virtuous and vicious in the universe.

Though there is not vice or virtue, however, there are virtuous or vicious agents. Certain actions, as soon as considered, excite a feeling of approbation, which leads us to class them together as virtuous; certain other actions excite a feeling of moral disapprobation, which leads us to class them together as vicious. There is, then, in the mind of each individual, a principle which leads him thus to divide actions into two great classes. But if, in the minds of different individuals, this distinction were very differently formed, so that the actions which seemed virtues to one were the very actions which seemed vices to another, it is evident that the social happiness, and even the social union of mankind, could not be preserved in this strange mixture of love and hate, of crimes and virtues, rewarded or punished as the admirers of truth or deceit, of cruelty or benevolence, chanced to obtain a precarious superiority in numbers or power. It is necessary for general peace, even though no other relation were to be considered, that there should be some great rules of conduct, according to which all may direct their actions in one harmonious course of virtue; or according to which, at least, in any partial discord of the actions of individuals, the moral sentiment of the community may be harmoniously directed, in checking what would be generally injurious, and furthering what would be generally beneficial. There is, therefore, we found, such an accordance of sentiment — of sentiment that is directed by the provident benevolence of God to the happiness of all who live in the great social communion of mankind, even when the individual, acting in conformity with the sentiment, has no thought beyond the sufferer whose anguish he relieves, or the friend to whose happiness he feels it more than happiness to contribute, or the preservation of his own internal character of moral excellence, in cases in which pain is encountered or pleasure sacrificed with no other object than that moral excellence itself. Since the world was created there have indeed been myriads

of human beings on the earth ; but there has been only one God, and there is only one God. There is, therefore, only one great voice of approbation in all the myriads of mankind ; because He, the great approver and the great former of our moral constitution, is one. We may refrain from virtue ; we may persecute virtue ; but, though our actions may be the actions of hatred, there is a silent reverence which no hatred can suppress. The omnipresent Judge of human actions speaks in the cause of the wicked as in the cause of the good, and has made it impossible for us, even in the wildest abuses of our power, not to revere, at least in heart, the virtue which he has honoured with his love.

In asserting the wide accordance of this moral voice, however, it was necessary to consider the objections to the harmony of sentiment which have been drawn from some practices and institutions that seem, at least as first considered, to be proofs of discord rather than harmony. That there are instances, and many instances, of such apparent anomaly, it would have been absurd to endeavour to disprove. But it might still be inquired, whether even these instances are really anomalous, or only seem so from erroneous opinions of the nature of that modified agreement which alone is necessary to the supporter of the original tendencies,—distinctive emotions of vice and virtue.

This consideration of the species of accordance which the moral phenomena might, from our knowledge of the general nature of the mind, be expected to indicate, on the supposition of an original principle of moral feeling, led us into some very interesting trains of inquiry ; of which the result was the ascertainment of certain limits, within which remains, unaffected by the sophistries opposed to it, all that uniformity for which it is wisdom to contend,—limits that do not imply any defect of original tendency to certain moral emotions, but only the operation of other causes, that concur with this original influence ; and that might, *a priori*, have been expected to have this modifying effect ;

if, without considering any of the objections urged, we had only reflected on the analogous phenomena of other principles of the mind, that are allowed to be essential to it and universal, and that are yet capable of similar modification.

The limitations to which we were led were of three kinds,—first, the temporary influence of every feeling that completely occupies the mind, especially of any violent passion, which blinds us at the moment to moral distinctions,—that is to say, prevents, by its own vividness, the rise of the less vivid feelings of approbation or disapprobation; in the same manner as, in similar circumstances, it would blind to the discernment even of the universal truths of science,—that is to say, would not allow us to perceive for the time the simplest and least mutable of all relations,—the proportions of number and quantity,—if an arithmetician or geometer, when we were under the influence of anger, sudden jealousy, or any other violent emotion, were to discourse to us calmly of square or cube roots, or of the properties of right-angled triangles. These arithmetical or geometrical properties we discover readily, when our passion has subsided; and, in like manner, we discover readily, when our passion has wholly subsided, the moral distinctions which we were incapable of perceiving before.

A second limitation, which we found it necessary to form, arises from the complex results of good and evil, in a single action,—the difficulty of calculating the preponderance of good or evil, according to which felt preponderance alone, our approbation or disapprobation arises,—and the various degrees of importance attached, and justly attached, in different ages and nations, to parts of the complex results, which are most in harmony with the spirit of the nation or the age; that is to say, which tend, or are conceived to tend, most to the production of that particular national good which it may have been an error in policy, indeed, to desire, but which still was the object of a policy, wise or unwise. What we esteem evil upon the whole, others may

esteem good upon the whole ; because there is, in truth, a mixture of good and evil, the parts of which may be variously estimated, but of which no one loves the evil as evil, or hates the good as good. It is some form of good, which is present to the mind of the agent, when he regards as morally right, that compound result of good and evil, of which we, with better discernment, appreciate better the relative amount. Even the atrocious virtues, if I may use that combination of words, of which voyagers relate to us instances in savage life, or which have sometimes prevailed even in nations more civilized, we found in our inquiry, might very naturally, without any defect, or inconsistency of moral emotion, arise from some misconception of this sort. Vices may every where be found prevailing as vices ; but when they are generally revered as virtues, it is because there is in them something which is truly, in those circumstances, virtue, however inferior the amount of good may be to the amount of evil. It is for some prominent moral good, however, that they are approved ; and the defective analysis, which does not perceive the amount of accompanying evil, is an error of judgment, not an approbation of that which is injurious to individuals or mankind, for the sake of that very injury.

The third limitation which we were led to form, is that which arises from the influence of the associating principle, —an influence that concurs with the former in almost every instance, and promotes it. When actions have complicated results, this principle may lead us to think more of one part of the result than of another part ; and, by the remembrances which it yields of the virtues of those whom we have loved, adds all the force of its own lively impressions to the particular virtues that are so recommended to us, or to actions that might otherwise have been absolutely indifferent. This influence, however, far from disproving the reality of original tendencies to moral feeling, is, as I showed you, in many of the cases in which it operates most

powerfully, one of the most interesting exemplifications of these very moral emotions. It is by loving those whom it is virtue to love, that we learn often to value too highly, what otherwise we should have valued with a juster estimate. The same principle we found too to operate strongly in exciting, through the medium of general terms and general rules, a disproportionate emotion in some cases, in which we have learned to apply to individual cases an emotion that has resulted from many previous analogous emotions.

Such are the limits within which alone the original tendency of our nature to certain moral emotions, and the consequent accordance of moral distinctions can be defended, —but within these limits it may safely be maintained. There is in our breast a susceptibility of moral emotion, by which we approve or condemn; and the principle which thus approves or condemns in us, is the noblest of the ties that connect us with the universal community of mankind.

LECTURE X.

OF THE USE OF THE TERM MORAL SENSE; ARRANGEMENT OF THE PRACTICAL VIRTUES.

IN my last Lecture, after concluding my remarks on the theory of our moral sentiments which Dr. Smith has proposed, — the last of the theories on this subject which required our consideration, as differing in its principles from the view which I have given you,—I briefly recapitulated the general doctrines which we had previously been led to form of the phenomena of moral approbation.

All our moral sentiments, then, of obligation, virtue, merit, are in themselves, as we have seen, nothing more than one simple feeling, variously referred to actions, as

future, present, or past. With the loss of the susceptibility of this one peculiar species of emotion, all practical morality would instantly cease: for, if the contemplation of actions excited in us no feeling of approval, no foresight, that, by omitting to perform them, we should regard ourselves, and others would regard us, with abhorrence or contempt, or at least with disapprobation, it would be absurd to suppose that there could be any moral obligation to perform certain actions and not to perform certain other actions, which seemed to us, morally, equal and indifferent. There could, in like manner, be no virtue nor vice in performing, and no merit nor demerit in having performed an action, the omission of which would have seemed to the agent as little proper, or as little improper as the performance of it, — in that state of equal indiscriminate regard or disregard, in which the plunderer and the plundered, the oppressor and the oppressed, were considered only as the physical producers of a different result of happiness or misery.

It is by this one susceptibility, then, of certain vivid distinctive emotions, that we become truly moral beings, united, under the guardianship of Heaven, in one great social system, benefiting and benefited, and not enjoying the advantage of this mutual protection only in the protection itself, that is constantly around us, but enjoying also the pleasure of affording the reciprocal benefit, and even a sort of pleasure of no slight amount, in the various wants themselves, which are scarcely felt as wants, when we know that they are to be remedied by the kind hearts and gentle hands whose offices of aid we have before delighted to receive, and are in perfect confidence of again receiving. Such is the great system of social duties that connects mankind by ties, of which our souls do not feel the power less truly, because they are ties which only the soul can feel, and which do not come within the sphere of our bodily perception. By that delightful emotion, which follows the contemplation of virtue, we can enjoy it, even while it is not exercised, in

all its aspects, as past, or future, as much as present. In our meditations on it, it is like some tranquil delight that awaits us, which, in the very act of virtue, comes like an immediate reward to actions that seem to need no other recompense, while they are thus rewarded; and to look back upon the generous toil, or the generous self-privation, as among the things which have been, is at once to enjoy again the past delight, and to feel in it a sort of pledge of future returns of similar enjoyment, — increased trust of being able and worthy to perform again, whenever the opportunity of them shall recur, actions as worthy of delight, and as delightful.

It is by this unceasing delight, which Virtue is ever spreading out before us, not merely in the direct exercise of the actions which we term virtuous, but in the contemplation of them as future in our wishes, or as past, in the remembrances of a good conscience, that moral excellence is truly and philosophically worthy of the glorious distinction, by which the author of the *Essay on Man* would characterize it, of being what “alone is happiness below.”

The only point where human bliss stands still,
And tastes the good, without the fall to ill ;
Where only Merit constant pay receives,
Is blest, in what it takes and what it gives ;
The joy unequall'd, if its end it gain,
And, if it lose, attended with no pain ;
Without satiety, though e'er so blest,
And but more relish'd, as the more distress'd ;
The broadest mirth unfeeling Folly wears,
Less pleasing far than Virtue's very tears ;
Good from each object, from each place acquired,
For ever exercised, yet never tired ;
Never elated, while one man's oppress'd,
Never dejected, while another's blest ;
And where no wants, no wishes, can remain,
Since but to wish more virtue is to gain.

In tracing to an original susceptibility of the mind our

moral feelings of obligation in the conception of certain actions as future, of virtue in the present performance or wish to perform certain actions, and of merit in the past performance or past resolution to perform certain actions, we may be considered as arriving at a principle like that which Dr. Hutcheson, after Lord Shaftesbury, has distinguished by the name of the Moral Sense, and of which, as an essential principle of our constitution, he has defended the reality with so much power of argument, in his various works on morals. In our moral feelings, however, I discover no peculiar analogy to perceptions or sensations, in the philosophic meaning of those terms; and the phrase moral sense, therefore, I consider as having had a very unfortunate influence on the controversy as to the original moral differences of actions, from the false analogies which it cannot fail to suggest. Were I to speak of a moral sense at present, you would understand me as speaking rather metaphorically, than according to the real place which we should be inclined to give, in our arrangement, to the original principle of our nature, on which the moral emotions depend. But by Hutcheson it was asserted to be truly and strictly a sense, as much a sense as any of those which are the source of our direct external perceptions; and though this difference of nomenclature and of arrangement on his part, evidently arose from a misconception, or, at least, a very loose meaning of the word sense, different from that in which it is commonly understood, as limited to the feelings which we acquire directly from affections of our bodily organs, still this loose meaning of the term which he intended it to convey, was, in some measure, mingled and confused in the minds of others, with the stricter meaning commonly assigned to it; and the assertion of a moral sense has been regarded almost as the assertion of the existence of some primary medium of perception, which conveys to us directly moral knowledge, as the eye enables us to distinguish directly the varieties of colours, or the ear

the varieties of sounds; and the scepticism, which would have been just with respect to such an organ of exclusive moral feeling, has been unfortunately extended to the certain moral principle itself, as an original principle of our nature. Of the impropriety of ascribing the moral feelings to a sense, I am fully aware then, and the place which I have assigned to them among the moral phenomena is, therefore, very different. In the emotions, which the contemplation of the voluntary actions of those around us produces, there is nothing that seems to demand, for the production of such emotions, a peculiar sense, more than is to be found in any of our other emotions. Certain actions excite in us, when contemplated, the vivid feelings which we express too coldly when, from the poverty of language, we term them approbation or disapprobation, and which are not estimates formed by an approving or disapproving judgment, but emotions that accompany and give warmth to such estimates. Certain other objects of thought excite in us other vivid feelings that are in like manner classed as emotions,—hope, jealousy, resentment; and, therefore, if all emotions, excited by the contemplation of objects, were to be referred to a peculiar sense, we might as well speak of a sense of those emotions, or of a sense of covetousness or despair, as of a sense of moral regard. If sense, indeed, were understood in this case to be synonymous with mere susceptibility, so that, when we speak of a moral sense, we were to be understood to mean only a susceptibility of moral feeling of some sort, we might be allowed to have a sense of morals, because we have, unquestionably, a susceptibility of moral emotion; but in this very wide extension of the term, we might be said, in like manner, to have as many senses as we have feelings of any sort; since, in whatever manner the mind may have been affected, it must have had a previous susceptibility of being so affected, as much as in the peculiar affections that are denominated moral.

The great error of Dr. Hutcheson, and of other writers

who treat of the susceptibility of moral emotion, under the name of the moral sense, appears to me to consist in their belief of certain moral qualities in actions, which excite in us what they consider as ideas of these qualities, in the same manner as external things give us, not merely pain or pleasure, but notions or ideas of hardness, form, colour. Indeed, it is on this account that the great champion of this doctrine professes to regard the moral principle as a sense; from its agreement, as he says, with this definition, which he conceives to be the accurate definition of a sense, "a determination of the mind to receive any idea from the presence of an object, which occurs to us independent on our will." What he terms an idea, in this case, is nothing more than an emotion considered in its relation to the action which has excited it. A certain action is considered by us—a certain emotion arises. There is no idea in the philosophic meaning of that term, but of the agent himself and of the circumstances in which he was placed, and the physical changes produced by him; and our ideas or notions of these we owe to other sources. To the moral principle, the only principle of which Hutcheson could mean to speak as a moral sense, we owe the emotion itself, and nothing but the emotion.

In one use of the word, indeed, we may be said to owe to our susceptibility of moral emotion, ideas, because we owe to it, as the primary source, the emotions of this species which we remember; and remembrances of past feelings are often termed ideas of those feelings: but in this application of the word, as synonymous with a mere remembrance, every feeling, as capable of being remembered, may be a source of ideas independently of the will, and therefore, according to the definition which is given by Hutcheson, equally a sense.

There is yet another meaning of the word, however, and a still more important one, in relation to our present inquiry, in which our susceptibility of moral emotion is

productive of what, in the general loose language of metaphysical writers, have been termed ideas ; and it is by his defective analysis of what is truly meant in the phrase moral ideas, and of the process which evolves them, that I conceive Hutcheson to have been chiefly misled, in supposing us to be endowed with a sense of moral qualities of actions. The process to which I allude, is the common process of generalization, to which alone we owe the general notions of virtue, vice, right and wrong, which he ascribes to a particular sense that affords us these ideas. If we had never contemplated more than a single virtuous or vicious action, we should have had only the particular emotion which followed that particular contemplation, and should as little have formed the general notions of virtue and vice, as we should have formed the notion which is expressed by the word quadruped, if we had seen only a single animal with four legs. It is not by one action only of one definite kind, however, that is to say, by an agent placed only in one set of circumstances, and producing only one particular effect, that our moral emotion is excited ; nor is there only one unvarying feeling of the mind, of one exact degree of intensity, which we denominate a moral emotion, as excited by various moral actions. There are various analogous actions which excite various analogous moral feelings of approbation or disapprobation ; and it is in consequence of the feeling of the similarity of these emotions, that we learn to class together the different actions that excite these similar emotions under a single word, virtuous, or right, or proper, or vicious, wrong, improper. The ideas, of which Hutcheson speaks, are these general notions only. There are virtuous agents, not virtue, as there are minds that have certain feelings, approving or disapproving, not approbation or disapprobation, as one simple state, in all the varieties of these feelings. Virtue, vice, right and wrong, are, in short, mere general terms, as much as any other mere general terms, which we have formed to express the

similarities of particular things or particular qualities. The general notions, and consequently the general terms, that denote them, we derive indeed from our susceptibility of moral feeling, since we must have the moral emotions themselves, before we can discover them to be like or unlike, and invent words for expressing briefly their similarities; but what Dr. Hutcheson and other writers would term our ideas of virtue and vice, right and wrong,—though, in this sense, derived from our susceptibility of moral feeling, which gives us the emotions that are felt and classed as similar,—are derived from it, only as any other general notions of resemblances of any other feelings, or of the circumstances which induce in the mind certain similar feelings, necessarily presuppose the capacity of the feelings themselves, whatever they may be, which are afterwards considered as having this relation of similarity. There are no two feelings, perhaps, which may not be found to have some relation to each other, as there are, perhaps, no two external things which may not be found to have some analogy; and if, therefore, we suppose that we have a particular internal sense for every general notion of agreement of any kind, which we are capable of framing, we may be said to have as many senses as we have pairs of feeling which we are capable of comparing. There are innumerable similarities which are felt by us every hour, and consequently innumerable general notions, though we may have invented names only for a few of them. Our moral emotions, like our other emotions, and our other feelings of every kind, impress us with certain resemblances which they mutually bear; and the importance of the actions which agree in exciting the analogous feelings of moral approbation or disapprobation, from the influence which they widely exercise on happiness as beneficial or injurious, has led, in every age and country, to the designation of them by certain general names, as virtuous or vicious, proper or improper; but these general terms are

not the less general terms, and only general terms, significant merely of the resemblance of various particular actions, which agree in exciting in the mind certain feelings that are analogous. This distinction of virtue, vice, right, wrong, merit, demerit, as mere general terms, expressive only of an analogous relation which certain actions bear to certain emotions, I conceive to be of the utmost importance for your clear understanding of the theory of morals ; and I have dwelt on it, therefore, with the wish that it should become familiar to your minds. You are not to conceive, as Dr. Hutcheson's view of our moral feelings might lead you to imagine, that we discover a certain idea of right or wrong, virtue or vice, from the contemplation of any one particular action, as if there were a sense for the reception of such ideas, that flow from them like light from the sun, or fragrant particles from a rose. There is no right or wrong, virtue or vice, but there are agents whose actions cannot be contemplated by us without an emotion of approbation or disapprobation ; and all actions, that is to say, all agents, that agree in exciting moral feelings which are thus analogous, we class together as virtuous or vicious, from this circumstance of felt agreement alone. The similarity of the emotions which we feel, in these particular cases, is thus all to which we owe the notions, or, as Dr. Hutcheson calls them, the ideas, of right and wrong, virtue and vice ; and it is not more wonderful that we should form these general notions, than that we should form any other general notions whatever.

The error of Dr. Hutcheson with respect to qualities, in objects that excite in us what he terms moral ideas, is similar to that which led many ethical writers — as we saw in reviewing their different systems—to refer our moral sentiments to reason or judgment, as the principle which measures the fitnesses of certain actions for producing certain ends ; and which approves or disapproves accordingly, as different actions seem more or less adapted for

producing the desired end. The truth is, that moral approbation or disapprobation, though, from the common use of those terms, and the poverty of our language, I have been obliged to employ them in our past discussions, are terms that are very inadequate to express the liveliness of the moral feelings to which we give those names. The moral emotions are more akin to love or hate, than to perception or judgment. What we call our approbation of an action, inasmuch as the moral principle is concerned, is a sort of moral love when the action is the action of another, or moral complacency when the action is our own, and nothing more. It is no exercise of reason, discovering congruities, and determining one action to be better fitted than another action, for affording happiness or relieving misery. This logical or physical approbation may precede, indeed, the moral emotion, and may mingle with it, and continue to render it more and more lively while we are under its influence; but even when such approbation precedes it, it is distinct from the emotion itself; and we might judge and approve of the fitness, or disapprove of the unfitness, of certain actions to produce happiness, with the same precision as we now judge and approve, or disapprove, though we had not been, as we are, moral beings, desirous of the happiness of others, and feeling a vivid delightful emotion, on the contemplation of such actions as tend to produce that happiness. However our judgment, as mere judgment, may have been exercised before, in discerning the various relations of actions to the happiness of the world, the moral principle is the source only of the emotion which follows the discovery of such fitness; and not in the slightest degree of the judgment which measures and calculates the fitness, any more than it is a source of the fitness itself. When we speak of our moral approbation of an action, we may indeed, from the convenience of such brief expressions, have some regard to both feelings, to our judgment of the fitness of an action

to produce good to an individual or to the world, and to our moral love of the beneficial action which follows this discovery. But still, it is not to be forgotten, that it is the latter part only, the distinctive moral regard, that belongs to the principle which we have been considering; the discovery of the fitness is a common exercise of judgment, that differs no more from the other exercises of it than these differ from each other. It is in the order of our emotions, accordingly, that I have assigned a place to our moral feelings, in my arrangement of the phenomena of the mind; because, though we are accustomed to speak of moral approbation, moral judgments, or moral estimates of actions, the feelings which we thus comprehend under a single term are not the simple vivid feeling, which is all that truly constitutes the moral emotion, but a combination of this vivid feeling with the judgment as to the fitness or tendency of the action, which, as a mere judgment, preceded and gave rise to the emotion. What is strictly the moral part of the compound is, however, as I have already said, the emotion, and the emotion only.

There is, in this case, with respect to mere judgment, precisely the same error which we have traced in the reasons that led Dr. Hutcheson to the supposition of a moral sense. What are termed moral ideas of virtue, merit, obligation,—the consideration of which, as moral ideas, was, as his definition and his general reasoning show, the very circumstance which led him into his error,—are merely, as I have repeatedly endeavoured to demonstrate to you, the one vivid moral emotion, referred to the actions which excite it. There are no ideas, therefore, which require the supposition of a peculiar sense for affording them, even if a sense were necessary for all those feelings which are termed simple ideas. There is only a particular emotion, indicating, of course, a peculiar susceptibility of this emotion in the mind; and, together with this vivid feeling, actions, or ideas of certain actions, and their

cousequences, which may be said, indeed, to be moral ideas, when combined with this vivid feeling, but which, as ideas, are derived from other sources. It is not the moral principle which sees the agent, and all the circumstances of his action, or which sees the happiness or misery that has flowed from it; but when these are seen, and all the motives of the agent divined, it is the moral principle of our nature which then affords the emotion that may afterwards, in our conception, be added to these ideas derived from other sources, and form with them compound notions of all the varieties of actions that are classed by us as forms of virtue or vice.

The reference of our moral love of certain actions and moral abhorrence of other actions to a peculiar sense, termed the moral sense, has arisen, then, we may conclude, from a defective analysis, or at least from a misconception of the nature of those moral ideas of which the defenders of this sense speak, and which seem to them falsely to indicate the necessity of such a sense for affording them. The ideas of which they speak are truly complex feelings of the mind. We have only to perform the necessary analysis, and all which we discover is a certain emotion of moral love, that, according to circumstances, is more or less lively, and the notion of certain actions, that is to say, of agents real or supposed, willing and producing certain effects. We may, for the sake of brevity, invent the general words virtue, right, propriety, as significant of all the actions which are followed in us by this emotion. But these are mere generalizations, like other generalizations; and there is no virtue in nature, more than there is quadruped or substance.

But, though Dr. Hutcheson may have erred in not analyzing with sufficient minuteness the moral ideas of which he speaks, and in giving the name of a moral sense to the susceptibility of a mere emotion akin to our other emotions, this error is of little consequence as to the moral

distinctions themselves. Whether the feeling that attends the contemplation of certain actions admit of being more justly classed with our sensations or perceptions, or with our emotions, there is still a susceptibility of this feeling or set of feelings, original in the mind, and as essential to its very nature as any other of the principles or functions, which we regard as universally belonging to our mental constitution ; as truly essential to the mind, indeed, as any of those senses among which Dr. Hutcheson would fix its place.

The sceptical conclusions which some writers have conceived to be deducible from the doctrine of a moral sense, might, if they could be justly drawn from that doctrine, be equally deducible from the doctrine of moral emotions for which I have contended ; since the emotions may be regarded as almost the same feelings under a different name. A very slight notice, however, of the objection which these conclusions are supposed to furnish, will be sufficient for showing the radical error in which the objection has its source. You will find it stated and illustrated at great length in Dr. Price's elaborate, but very tedious, and not very clear, Review of the principal questions of morals. It is more briefly stated by Mr. Stewart in his Outlines.

“ From the hypothesis of a moral sense, various sceptical conclusions have been deduced by later writers. The words Right and Wrong, it has been alleged, signify nothing in the objects themselves to which they are applied, any more than the words sweet and bitter, pleasant and painful ; but only certain effects in the mind of the spectator. As it is improper, therefore, (according to the doctrines of modern philosophy,) to say of an object of taste, that it is sweet ; or of heat, that it is in the fire ; so it is equally improper to say of actions, that they are right or wrong. It is absurd to speak of morality as a thing independent and unchangeable : inasmuch as it arises from

an arbitrary relation between our constitution and particular objects.

“In order to avoid these supposed consequences of Dr. Hutcheson’s philosophy, an attempt has been made by some later writers, in particular by Dr. Price, to revive the doctrines of Dr. Cudworth, and to prove, that moral distinctions, being perceived by reason or the understanding, are equally immutable with all other kinds of truth.”¹

That right and wrong signify nothing in the objects themselves, is indeed most true. They are words expressive only of relation; and relations are not existing parts of objects, or things, to be added to objects, or taken from them. There is no right nor wrong, virtue nor vice, merit nor demerit, existing independently of the agents who are virtuous or vicious; and, in like manner, if there had been no moral emotions to arise on the contemplation of certain actions, there would have been no virtue, vice, merit, or demerit, which express only relations to these emotions. But though there be no right nor wrong in an agent, the virtuous agent is not the same as the vicious agent,—I do not say merely to those whom he benefits or injures, but to the most remote individual who contemplates that intentional production of benefit or injury. All are affected, on the contemplation of these, with different emotions; and it is only by the difference of these moral emotions that these actions are recognised as morally different. We feel that it will be impossible, while the constitution of nature remains as it is,—and we may say, even from the traces of the divine benevolence which the universe displays, impossible, while God himself, the framer of our constitution, and adapter of it to purposes of happiness, exists,—that the lover and intentional producer of misery, as misery, should ever be viewed with tender esteem; or that he

¹ Outlines of Moral Philosophy, 4th edition, 8vo, p. 132.

whose only ambition has been to diffuse happiness more widely than it could have flowed without his aid, should be regarded with the detestation, on that account, which we now feel for the murderer of a single helpless individual, or for the oppressor of as many sufferers as a nation can contain in its whole wide orb of calamity; and a distinction which is to exist while God himself exists, or at least which has been, and as we cannot but believe will be, coeval with the race of man, cannot surely be regarded as very precarious. It is not to moral distinctions only that this objection, if it had any force, would be applicable. Equality, proportion, it might be said, in like manner, signify nothing in the objects themselves to which they are applied, more than vice or virtue. They are as truly mere relations, as the relations of morality. Though the three sides of a right-angled triangle exist in the triangle itself, and constitute it what it is, what we term the properties of such a triangle do not exist in it, but are results of a peculiar capacity of the comparing mind. It is man, or some thinking being like man, whose comparison gives birth to the very feeling that is termed by us a discovery of the equality of the squares of one of the sides to the squares of the other two; that is to say,—for the discovery of this truth is nothing more,—it is man who, contemplating such a triangle, is impressed with this relation, and who feels afterwards that it would be impossible for him to contemplate it without such an impression. If this feeling of the relation never had arisen, and never were to arise in any mind, though the squares themselves might still exist as separate figures, their equality would be nothing,—exactly as justice and injustice would be nothing, where no relation of moral emotion had ever been felt; for equality, like justice, is a relation not a thing; and, if strictly analyzed, exists only, and can exist only, in the mind, which, on the contemplation of certain objects, is impressed with certain feelings of relation;—in the same manner as

right and wrong, virtue, vice, relate to emotions excited in some mind that has contemplated certain actions,—without whose contemplations of the actions, it will readily be confessed, there could be no right nor wrong, virtue nor vice, as there could be no other relation without a mind that contemplates the objects said to be related. Certain geometrical figures cannot be contemplated by us without exciting certain feelings of the contemplating mind,—which are notions of equality or proportion. Is it necessary that the equality should be itself something existing in the separate figures themselves, without reference to any mind that contemplates them, before we put any confidence in geometry? Or is it not enough that every mind which does contemplate them together, is impressed with that particular feeling, in consequence of which they are ranked as equal? And, if it be not necessary, in the case of a science which we regard as the surest of all sciences, that the proportions of figures should be any thing inherent in the figures, why should it be required, before we put confidence in morality, that right and wrong should be something existing in the individual agents? It is not easy, indeed, to understand what is meant by such an inherence as is required in this postulate; or what other relations actions can be supposed to have as right or wrong, than to the minds which are impressed by them with certain feelings. Of this, at least, we may be sure, that, if any doubt can truly exist as to relations which we and all mankind have felt, since the creation of the very race of man,—because, though, with our present constitution, we feel it impossible to consider cruelty as amiable, and greater cruelty as more amiable, we might, if the frame of our mind were altered, love the ferocity which we now detest, and fly from freedom and general benevolence, to take shelter in some more delightful waste, where there might be the least possible desire of good, and the least possible enjoyment of it, among plunderers whom we loved

much, and murderers whom we loved and honoured more—if any doubt of this kind could truly be felt, the reference which Dr. Price would make, of our moral sentiments to reason, would leave the difficulty and the doubt exactly where they were before ; since reason is but a principle of our mental frame, like the principle which is the source of moral emotion, and has no peculiar claim to remain unaltered in the supposed general alteration of our mental constitution. What we term reason, is only a brief expression of a number of separate feelings of relation, of which the mind might or might not have been formed to be susceptible. If the mind of man remain as it is, our moral feelings, in relation to their particular objects, are as stable as our feelings of any other class ; and if the mind of man be altered in all its functions, it is absurd for us to make distinctions of classes of feelings in the general dissolution of every thing which we at present know,—absurd even to guess at the nature of a state which arises from a change that is imaginary only, and that by our very supposition is to render us essentially different in every respect from the state with which we are at present acquainted.

It is a very powerless scepticism, indeed, which begins by supposing a total change of our nature. We might, perhaps, have been formed to admire only the cruel, and to hate only the benevolent ; as in spite of an axiom, that now seems to us self-evident, we might all have been formed to think with the lunatic, that the cell in which he is confined is larger than the whole earth, of which it is a part. What the mind of a single madman is, the minds of all men might certainly be ; and we might no longer feel the same moral relations, as we might no longer feel the same geometrical relations of space. But if the moral distinctions be as regular as the whole system of laws which carry on in unbroken harmony the motions of the universe, this regularity is sufficient for us while we exist on earth ; and when we leave this earth, we carry with us a conscience

which can have little fear, that the virtues which Heaven has made it so delightful for us to practise below, and which have been the chief instruments of producing a happiness which, when the universe was formed with such innumerable adaptations to the enjoyment of all who live, was surely not foreign to the intention of its Author, will, in that immortality, which is only a prolongation of this mortal life, be regarded with abhorrence by that great Being, whose perfections, however faintly, we have endeavoured to image, and who has here been so lavish to us of a love as constant in its approbation of moral good as the moral excellence which it has made happy.

We have now, then, examined very fully the great question, as to the distinctions which we find man every where to have made of actions, as morally right or wrong ; and I trust, for the sake of your happiness in life at least, as much as for the accuracy of your philosophy, that you are not inclined to withhold your logical assent from the doctrine of the moral distinction of vice and virtue ; a doctrine which seems to me to have every character of truth as a faithful picture of the phenomena of the mind, and which it would therefore be as erroneous as it would be miserable to deny.

Certain actions then excite, when considered by us, certain emotions of moral regard. But what are those actions, and how are they to be arranged ?

In this inquiry, which involves the whole doctrine of practical ethics, philosophers have been very generally misled by that spirit of excessive simplification, of which, in the course of the various discussions that have occupied us together, we have had occasion to remark many striking instances, and in part, too, by the influence of another error, which also we have had frequent occasion of remarking,—the error of considering mere abstractions as realities.

In considering the emotion, or rather the various emotions excited by the various objects which are termed

beautiful, we observed the constant tendency of inquirers into these interesting phenomena, to suppose that there is one universal Beauty, which is diffused in all the objects that are termed beautiful, and forms, as it were, a constituent part of themselves.

One Beauty of the world entire,
The universal Venus,—far beyond
The keenest effort of created eyes,
And their most wide horizon,—dwells enthroned
In ancient Silence. At her footstool stands
An altar burning with eternal fire,
Unsullied, unconsumed. Here, every hour,
Here, every moment, in their turns arrive
Her offspring ; — an innumerable band
Of sisters, comely all, but differing far
In age, in stature, and expressive mien,
More than bright Helen from her new-born babe.
To this maternal shrine, in turns they come
Each with her sacred lamp ; that, from the source
Of living flame, which here immortal flows,
Their portions of its lustre they may draw
For days, for months, for years, for *ages* some,
As their great Parent's discipline requires.
Then to their several mansions they depart,
In stars, in planets, through the unknown shores
Of yon ethereal ocean. Who can tell,
Even on the surface of this rolling earth,
How many make abode ? The fields, the groves,
The winding rivers, and the azure main,
Are render'd solemn by their frequent feet,
Their rites sublime. There each her destined home
Informs with that pure radiance from the skies
Brought down, and shines throughout her little sphere
Exulting.¹

This universal Venus, from the undecaying flame of whose altar has been derived whatever warms us with delight, in the myriads of myriads of objects that are lovely in nature,

¹ Pleasures of Imagination, book i.

is indeed one of the most magnificent personifications of poetry. But philosophy has in truth been as fond of this personification as poetry itself, and is for ever seeking in objects that are beautiful the charm of this universal Beauty. It has been not less fond of personification in its ethical inquiries, and has for ever been employed in the search of one universal Virtue, — of something that is capable of existing, as it were, in various forms, and that may be supposed to form a part of all the actions which are denominated virtuous. There is no virtue, however, as I have already repeatedly said; there are only virtuous actions; or, to speak still more correctly, only virtuous agents: and it is not one virtuous agent only, or any number of virtuous agents, acting in one uniform manner, that excite our moral emotion of regard; but agents acting in many different ways—in ways that are not less different in themselves, on account of the real or supposed simplicity of the generalizations and classifications which we may have made.

By some, all virtue has been said to consist in benevolence; as if temperance, patience, fortitude, all the heroic exercises of self-command, in adversity and every species of suffering, were not regarded by us with moral love, till we had previously discovered in the heroic sufferer some benevolent desire, which led him thus to endure without a single murmur, or rather, in all the circumstances of the case, with choice, an amount of physical evil, from which others would have shrunk with cowardly feebleness. By another sect of philosophers, the virtues of self-command have been exalted even above the gentler virtues of benevolence. By others, the calm exercise of justice has been said to involve all moral excellence; and almost every ethical writer has had some favourite virtue, to which he has built his altar, and ascribed to it a sort of omnipresence in all the other virtues that are adored; and that, but for the presence of this, as the inherent

divinity, would have been objects of a worship that was idolatrous.

From this very circumstance, indeed, of the different favourite virtues of different philosophers, some sophistical writers have endeavoured to draw conclusions subversive of the very distinctions of virtue and vice. They forget that even those who form their little exclusive systems, are still thus exclusive in their systems only; that in their hearts they feel the same regard for every virtue as if they had never entered into ethical controversy, and that the assertors of benevolence, as all which constitutes moral worth, did not, on that account, deny a moral difference of patience and impatience; they only laboured to prove, though they might not be very successful in their demonstration, that to be patient was but a form of being benevolent, and was valued by us for nothing more than the benevolence which it implied.

Of these too narrow systems it would be useless, however, to enter into any examination at present. Their error will be best seen by considering the virtues which they would exclude. The classification of these virtues, that may be regarded as the most convenient, is that which considers them as duties, in their relation to different individuals; and, in the first place, as the most comprehensive of all classifications, — the arrangement of them as duties which relate primarily to others, and duties which relate directly to ourselves.

LECTURE XI.

DIVISION OF THE PRACTICAL VIRTUES INTO THREE CLASSES: DUTIES THAT RELATE PRIMARILY TO OTHERS — DUTIES THAT RELATE DIRECTLY TO OURSELVES—AND DUTIES TO GOD.

AFTER the discussions in which we have been of late engaged, of the theory of morals, we are now to enter on the consideration of those practical duties of which we have been investigating the source. Man is not formed to know only; he is formed still more to avail himself of his knowledge, by acting in conformity with it. In the society in which he is placed, he is surrounded with a multitude, to almost every one of whom some effort of his may be beneficial; who, if they do not require the aid of his strenuous and long-continued exertions, which are necessary only on rare occasions, require, at least in the social intercourse of life, those little services of easy courtesy, which are not to be estimated as slight, from the seeming insignificance of each separate act; since they contribute largely to the amount of general happiness by the universality of their diffusion, and the frequency of the repetition. While his actions may thus have almost unremitting usefulness, Nature has, with a corresponding provision, made it delightful to man to be active; and, not content with making it delightful to him to be merely active, — since this propensity to action, which of itself might lead him sometimes to benefit others, might of itself also lead him to injure as well as to benefit, — she has, as we have seen, directed him how to act, by that voice of conscience which she has placed within his breast; and given still greater efficacy to that voice by the pain which she has attached to disobedience, and the pleasure that is felt in obeying it, and remembering it as obeyed. Of this moral pleasure it is, indeed, the high character, that it is the only pleasure

which no situation can preclude; since it is beyond the reach of all those external aggressions and chances which can lessen only the power of diffusing happiness, not the wish of diffusing it; and which, even in robbing the virtuous of every thing beside, must still leave with them the good which they have done, and the good which they would wish to do.

Human life, then, when it is such, as not impartial spectators only, but the individual himself can survey with pleasure, is the exercise, and almost the unremitting exercise, of duties. To have discharged these best, is to have lived best. It is truly to have lived the most nobly, though there may have been no vanities of wealth in the simple home, which was great only because it contained a great inhabitant; and no vanities of heraldry on the simple tomb, under the rude stone of which, or under the turf which is unmarked by any memorial, or by any ornament but the herbage and the flowers which nature every where sheds, the ashes of a great man repose. What mere symbols of honour, indeed, which man can confer, could add to the praise of him who possesses internally all which those symbols, even when they are not falsely representative of a merit that does not exist, can only picture to the gazer's eye, to the praise of him who has done every thing which it was right for him to do; who has abstained, in his very desires, from every thing which it would have required a sacrifice of virtue to possess; and who, in suffering the common ills of our nature, has suffered them as common ills, not repining at affliction, nor proud of enduring it without a murmur, but feeling only that it is a part of a great system which is good, and that it is that which it is easy to bear?

Human life, then, when it is worthy of the name of life, is, as I have said, the exercise of duties.

In treating of our practical virtues, I shall consider, first, those which directly relate to our fellow-creatures, and

afterwards those which immediately relate to ourselves. Besides these two classes of duties, indeed, there are others of a still higher kind — the duties which we owe to the great Being who formed us ; duties which, though they do not absolutely produce all the others, at least add to them a force of obligation, which more than doubles their own moral urgency ; and with the wilful violation or neglect of which, there can be as little moral excellence of character in the observance of other duties, as there would be in the virtue of any one who, after boasting of a thousand good deeds, should conclude by confessing, that he had never felt the slightest affection for the parent to whom he owed existence, and wisdom, and worldly honour, or for some generous benefactor who had been to him like a parent. These duties of gratitude and reverence which we owe to God, will admit, however, of more appropriate illustration, after the inquiries on which we are to enter in another part of the course, with respect to the traces of the divine perfections, that are revealed to us in the frame and order of the universe.

At present, then, the practical virtues which we have to consider, are those that relate immediately only to our fellow-creatures and ourselves.

Of these two great classes of duties, let us consider, in the first place, the duties that primarily relate to others.

Of the living multitude in the midst of which we are placed on this earth, which is our common home, by far the greater number have no other relation to us than simply as they are human beings ; who may, indeed, sometimes come within the sphere of our usefulness, and who, even when they are far beyond this sphere of active aid, are still within the range of our benevolent affection, to which there are no limits even in distance the most remote, but to whom this benevolence of mere wishes is the only duty which, in such circumstances, is consigned to us. There

are others, with whom we feel ourselves connected by peculiar ties, and to whom, therefore, we owe peculiar duties, varying in kind and importance with the nature of the circumstances that connect us with them. The general duties which we owe to all mankind may be treated first, before we enter on the consideration of the peculiar duties which we owe to certain individuals only of this wide community.

The general offices which we owe to every individual of mankind, may be reduced to two great generic duties—one negative, the other positive; one leading us to abstain from all intentional injury of others, the other leading us to be actively beneficial to them. With the former of these, at least with the greater number of the specific duties which it generically comprehends, justice is very nearly synonymous; with the other set of specific duties, benevolence; which, though it may, in truth, be made to comprehend the negative duties also, since, to wish to benefit, is at the same time to wish not to injure, is usually confined to the desire of positive increase of good, without including mere abstinence from injury.

I proceed, then, to the consideration of the former set of duties which are negative only,—as limited to abstinence from every thing which might be injurious to others.

These duties, of course, are specifically as various as the different sorts of injury which it is in our power to occasion, directly or indirectly. Such injuries, if man were wicked enough, and fearless enough both of individual resentment and of the law, to do whatever it is in his power to do, would, in their possible complication and variety, be almost beyond our power of numbering them, and giving them names. The most important, however, if arranged according to the objects which it is the direct immediate intention of the injurer, at the moment of his injury, to assail, may be considered as reducible to the following general heads:

They are injuries which affect the sufferer directly in his person—in his property—in the affections of others—in his character—in his knowledge or belief—in his virtue—in his tranquillity. They are injuries, I repeat, which are intended to affect the sufferer directly in his person—in his property—in the affections of others—in his character, &c.

Let us now, then, proceed to the consideration of these subdivisions of our merely negative duty, in the order in which I have now stated them. Of injuries to the person of another, the most atrocious, I need not say, is that which deprives him of life; and as it is the only evil which is absolutely irreparable by us, and is yet one to which many of our most impetuous passions might lead us, jealousy, envy, revenge, or even sudden wrath itself, without taking into account those instances of violence in which murder is only the dreadful mean of accomplishing a sordid end; the Creator and Preserver of man has provided against the frequency of a crime to which there might seem so many fearful inducements and facilities, by rendering the contemplation of it something from which even the most abandoned shrink with a loathing, that is, perhaps, the only human feeling which still remains in their heart; and the commission of it a source of a wilder agony of horror than can be borne, even by the gloomy heart which was capable of conceiving the crime. "*Homo homini res sacra.*" When we read or hear of the assassin, who is driven by the anguish of his own conscience to reveal to those whom most he dreaded, the secret which he was most anxious to hide; addressing himself to the guardians, not of the mere laws, which he has offended, (for of the laws of man he does not think, except that he may submit himself to that death which they only can award,) but to the guardians of the life and happiness of those whose interests have been assigned to them, the guardians of the individual whom their protection at that moment, which is ever before his

memory, was too powerless to save ; when we think of the number of years that in many instances of this kind have elapsed since the mortal blow was given, and of the inefficacy of time, which effaces all other sorrows, to lessen that remorse which no one suspected to be the cause of the wasting of the cheek, and the gloomy melancholy of the eye, can we fail to regard a spectacle like this, as an awful testimony to the goodness of that Almighty Protector of the world, who proportions the internal restraints of conscience to the iniquity that needs to be restrained, and to the amount of evil which would flow from it, if unrestrained, and who, seeming to leave the life of every individual at the mercy of every arm, has secured for it a defence in the very bosom of him whose watchful glance had already marked its victim, and whose hand was already almost raised to give the blow ? The reign of superstition, its wide and general reign, is now over, at least in our land. We do not need to have recourse to volumes of philosophy to convince us that the ghost which haunts the murderer, is but an image of his own fancy. This, now, the very children will tell us, while they laugh not so gaily, perhaps, as at other tales, but still with a laughter which, though mixed with some little horror, is sincere, at the spectres which their predecessors in the same nursery, a single generation back, would, on hearing the same story, have seen before their eyes for more than half the night. There is no fear then now that we should be tempted to suppose any peculiar supernatural visitation, in the shape that seems for ever rising to the eye of the murderer. It is to the influence of his strong conception alone that all will agree in ascribing it ; and if it be, as it most certainly is, the result only of conception that is awfully vivid, how strongly does it mark the horror, so far surpassing the horror of every other offence which must have given to the imagination this agonizing sensibility. The robber may plunder, the traitor may betray, without any moral super-

stition of this sort; but let one human being give his last gasp beneath the dagger of another human being, and though superstition had before been banished from the earth, there is at least one individual to whom this single crime would be sufficient to call it back.

The species of injury which I have placed next in order, is that which relates to the property of others.

Were we to consider for the first time the unequal distribution of property in society, without reflecting on the amount of general happiness to which that unequal distribution is subservient, we should scarcely know, in our astonishment at the seeming rapacity of the few and the acquiescence of the many, whether the boldness of such an usurpation, at least of that which on such a first unreflecting view would seem usurpation, or the strange submission by all the plundered, to an usurpation which they might have prevented, were the more wonderful. It would not be easy to represent this first aspect of society in a more lively manner than has been done by Paley.

“If you should see a flock of pigeons in a field of corn; and if (instead of each picking where and what it liked, taking just as much as it wanted, and no more,) you should see ninety-nine of them gathering all they got into a heap; reserving nothing for themselves but the chaff and the refuse; keeping this heap for one, and that the weakest, perhaps worst pigeon of the flock; sitting round and looking on all the winter, whilst this one was devouring, throwing about, and wasting it; and if a pigeon, more hardy or hungry than the rest, touched a grain of the hoard, all the others instantly flying upon it, and tearing it to pieces: if you should see this, you would see nothing more than what is every day practised and established among men. Among men, you see the ninety-and-nine toiling and scraping together a heap of superfluities for one, (and this one, too, oftentimes the feeblest and worst of the whole set, a child, a woman, a madman, or a fool;) getting nothing for them-

selves all the while, but a little of the coarsest of the provision, which their own industry produces; looking quietly on, while they see the fruits of all their labour spent or spoiled; and if one of the number take or touch a particle of the hoard, the others joining against him, and hanging him for the theft.”¹

There must, indeed, as this author adds, be “some very important advantages to account for an institution which, in this view of it, is so paradoxical and unnatural,” and such advantages it is very easy to discover. The gross inequality of property, strange as it may seem to be at any one moment, is, it is evident, only the effect of that security and absolute command of property, which allow the continual accumulation of it by continued industry; and without such security, and absolute command of the profits of exertion, the arm of the strong would soon have been weary with the little toil which was necessary for mere subsistence; and the ingenuity of the wise would have contented itself with enjoying, rather than augmenting, its scanty but precarious acquisitions. If all things had been common to all, that common all would truly have been of little worth to the individuals, who would have seen nothing appropriated, indeed, but nothing enjoyed. Instead of that beautiful and populous earth which we behold, — where cities pour wealth on the fields, and the fields, in their turn, send plenty to the cities, — where all are conferring aid and receiving aid, and the most sensual and selfish cannot consume a single luxury, without giving, however unintentionally, some comfort, or the means of comfort, to others, — instead of this noble dwelling-place of so many noble inhabitants, we should have had a waste or a wilderness, and a few miserable stragglers, half famished on that wide soil which now gives abundance to millions. Nor would the loss of mere external convenience and splendour have been the chief evil. The intellectual sciences, and arts, and

¹ Paley’s *Moral Philosophy*, 21st edition, 8vo, vol. i. p. 106.

systems of moral polity, which distinguish the civilized from the savage, by differences far more important than any which the eye can perceive, never would have arisen on such a scene. It was property, that very exclusive property, which is now better secured by the civilization to which it gave rise, that was itself, at a still earlier period, the great civilizer of man.

If, indeed, in considering these comforts of society, which flow from the distribution of property, that could not be secure without becoming soon unequal, we considered only the comfort of the few who possess the greater share, the happiness of the few might seem, and, it will be allowed, would truly be, comparatively, an object of too little value, to be set against any great loss of comfort on the part of the multitude. But it requires only a very slight reflection on the circumstances of society, as it is at present before us, to discover, that, even if the few have gained more, the many have gained much; and perhaps to a very nice observer and estimator of the situation of both,—of the enjoyment that is involved in mere occupation, and of the misery that is involved in the total want of it,—it might seem necessary to reverse the scale, and to ascribe the greater gain to the many rather than to the few. They profit by the results of every science and art, which they enable the studious, whom they support, to prosecute at their leisure; the speculations of the sage, whom they perhaps count idle,—speculations that teach new processes, mechanical or chemical, to the innumerable busy hands that are every moment producing, almost blindly, the beautiful results, of which they know little more than that they are of their own producing,—may be found at last embodied, as it were, in some humble implement or humble luxury, in the obscurest cottage; and even the wretch who, in the common prison, earns a part of his subsistence by the meanest operations to which, in the division of manufacturing labour, the human hand can be put, has accom-

modations which, miserable as they are, compared with the luxuries of the rich and the free, are yet themselves luxuries, compared with the far more miserable accommodations which, if there never had been any inequality of property among mankind, would, in that system of sloth, and consequent imbecility, have been the common lot of all. This influence of wealth, and of the division of labour, in the enjoyments of the lowest of the people, is very strongly pictured by Dr. Mandeville, in one of the most striking passages of his work.

“A man would be laughed at, that should discover luxury in the plain dress of a poor creature that walks along in a thick parish gown and a coarse shirt underneath it; and yet what a number of people, how many different trades, and what a variety of skill and tools, must be employed to have the most ordinary Yorkshire cloth. What depth of thought and ingenuity, what toil and labour, and what length of time must it have cost, before a man could learn from a seed to raise and prepare so useful a product as linen! Must that society not be vainly curious, among whom this admirable commodity, after it is made, shall not be thought fit to be used, even by the poorest of all, before it is brought to a perfect whiteness; which is not to be procured but by the assistance of all the elements, joined to a world of industry and patience? I have not done yet: Can we reflect, not only on the cost laid out upon this luxurious invention, but likewise on the little time the whiteness of it continues, in which part of its beauty consists; that every six or seven days at farthest it wants cleaning, and while it lasts, is a continual charge to the wearer; can we, I say, reflect on all this, and not think it an extravagant piece of nicety, that even those who receive alms of the parish, should not only have whole garments made of this operose manufacture, but likewise that, as soon as they are soiled, to restore them to their pristine purity, they should make use of one of the most judicious

as well as difficult compositions that chemistry can boast of; with which, dissolved in water by the help of fire, the most deterrent and yet innocent lixivium is prepared, that human industry has hitherto been able to invent." ¹

The feeling of a breach of duty in the violation of the property of another, though uniformly attendant on the notion of property, requires, of course, this notion as antecedent to the moral feeling; and property is, in a great measure, the creature of public law, not because our moral feelings are arbitrary results of the arbitrary institutions of man, but because, as soon as we are acquainted with the nature of social ordinances, and the advantages to which they give rise, these ordinances become themselves an object of that moral regard, the susceptibility of which, as an essential principle of the mind, preceded all law, and transfer this regard which themselves excite to forms of succession and transfer, which might otherwise have been arbitrary and indifferent. It is not in such cases, however, the social ordinance which is loved merely as an ordinance, but the good to which it is perceived that such ordinances, upon the whole, tend to give rise; and this obedience to that which is an evident source of good upon the whole, and which, in the particular case of property, is obviously productive of the greatest good, as a standard to which, in cases of doubtful right, all might be obliged to bend, and peace be thus preserved, when otherwise there could not fail to be hostility, is the circumstance that has extended to artificial arrangements of property, those moral emotions which originally had a narrower field, but which still have the same great object as before, when they embrace the widest plans of legislative wisdom.

The writers who attempt to prove justice to be a virtue wholly adventitious, and not the result of any original

¹ Fable of the Bees, vol. i. p. 182. London, 1728.

moral tendency of our nature, because in different stages or circumstances of society there are different views of property, forget that justice, as a moral virtue, is not the creation of property, but the conformity of our actions to those views ; that though all men in every part of the earth, and in every age since the earth was peopled, had, without even the exception of a single monstrous individual, united in their notions of what is termed property, there might still have been the most complete injustice,—a desire of invading this property, not merely as frequent as in the present circumstances of mankind, but equally universal with the notion of property itself. There might then, the mere notion of property remaining in every respect precisely the same, have been either perfect justice or perfect injustice, or such a mixture of both as the present order of society presents. It is justice not to invade that which is recognised as belonging to another ; and though law cannot produce justice, it may present to it new objects, by the standard which it fixes of transfers and successions, that otherwise might have been arbitrary ; and may present these new objects to our justice, without any breach of moral principle ; since, though law, as mere law, or the expression of the will of many individuals, can never be felt by us to be morally obligatory on this account alone, obedience to a system of laws, of which the evident tendency is to the public good, is itself an object of our moral regard, as soon as we are capable of knowing what law is, and what are its general beneficial tendencies. In the different rights of property, then, in different nations and ages, as variously sanctioned in various systems of jurisprudence, I perceive no inconsistency of the moral principle. I perceive every where, on the contrary, a moral principle which, among the rude and the civilized, and in all the innumerable gradations of civilized life, and of systems of law more or less sage and refined, feels that there are certain things which it would be wrong to invade ; in savage life, perhaps only the objects

which are in the immediate occupation of another, or on which he has exercised his labour for purposes of utility to himself; in more civilized society, innumerable objects which the circumstances of that society have rendered essential to the comfort of their possessor, and which law, with a view to the preservation and furtherance of general happiness, has allotted in various ways. Till it can be shown, therefore, that this regard for social ordinances that are manifestly, upon the whole, productive of good, and consequently the regard for that good of which they are productive, are inconsistent with the moral principle, of which the great object is that very good; the sophist, who would represent the varying rights of property as proofs of a varying morality, has no argument in showing the mere influence of such ordinances, that teach us to respect what otherwise might have been indifferent. It is the same moral principle of justice still, though directed to new objects; as it is still the same power of vision that traces the stars of the firmament, though, but for the nice contrivances of the optician, and the labour of all the ruder artificers who have furnished him with the materials of his beautiful art, eye after eye might for ages have gazed upon the great vault above, without knowing the very existence of brilliant multitudes of worlds, which, with the aid of this skilful but simple contrivance, it is now impossible for the rudest observer not to perceive. Who is there that, on this account, will deny to the mind its original visual sensibility? That mental sensibility is the same, the bodily organ of sight is the same; yet how different in power and extent is our vision itself! at least as different as the wider and narrower influence of justice that respects in one state of society a thousand objects which are unknown to it in a state of ruder polity.

In contending for essential principles of morals, no one asserts that, in circumstances which are absolutely different, the moral sentiment should be the same; more than that an

eye, with and without a telescope, should form the same views of the nature that is before it. In savage life, the notions of property are few, because there are, in truth, in such a state, few objects that can be useful to the individual. It is luxury, which, creating new objects and new wants, creates also new objects to be appropriated. It is probable, if we are to suppose man ever to have been absolutely savage, without the exercise of a single art, that mere occupancy was then the only title. Indeed, what other title to the common gifts of nature could there in such circumstances be? When his labour, however, had been employed in rendering useful what in itself had no use, he would not merely feel the work of his art to be his own; but the work would be respected as his by those who knew the labour which he had employed, and the purposes of personal advantage to which it was meant to be instrumental; or at least, if in such circumstances of temptation it were an object of rapine to others, there would still, unless in circumstances of mutual enmity, be a feeling of conscious wrong in the aggressor. This species of property we accordingly find recognised wherever man is to be found; and is it wonderful that other species of property, which could not even be conceived in savage life, however useful in the circumstances of refined society, should not be regarded as sacred by those to whom the possession of it would seem to confer no utility on the possessor; who would rather have the trouble of excluding others, than the pleasure of enjoying that from which he excluded them?

The mere history of property, then, interesting as it is in the illustrations which it affords of many beautiful phenomena of our moral nature, and of the advantages which man receives from the social government, to the force of which his own individual power has contributed as an element, like the other elements that mingle with it, is yet valuable only as illustrative. The moral principle which, in the various stages of society, in all the varieties of pro-

erty which social ordinances have made or secured, impresses on us the duty of respecting the various objects which are property, that is to say, which are objects that, in these particular circumstances of society, could not be violated without a feeling of self-reproach in the invader, is all which, ethically, we have to consider. That such a feeling does arise in the breast of him who invades what, in the general circumstances of the society, is regarded as property, even the sophist, who would found so much on the varying circumstances in which it arises, does not dispute; and it is this feeling, in whatever circumstances, and in whatever manner it may have arisen, from which the duty flows. Whether the object be of a kind which, even in the fabled state of nature, we should have felt it right to respect, as the property of him who had won and occupied it with his own unwearied labour, or of a kind which we respect as property, because we respect that social good which arises from the laws that have declared it to be property, it is not wonderful that our feeling of respect for it should seem, in these two cases, to be the same; since the respect is only that feeling of moral duty, the object of which, that is always some form of good to others, is in both cases truly the same.

Justice, then, I repeat, (and the distinction is one which is of great importance,) is not what constitutes property; it is that virtue which presupposes property, and respects it, however constituted. It may vary, therefore, with all the ordinances of different social states, but it is still the same virtue, if it respect what, in those different states, is legally assigned to individuals; and, as the same virtue, in all these cases, directed to the same object of abstaining from what is previously affirmed or recognised as property, it does not vary in the variations of human policy, that may assign to individuals in one state, what, from different views of general good, would not be assigned to them in a different state; but which still, in every case, points out to

justice what is to be understood as the property which that unvarying virtue does not fail to respect.

To point out to you the advantages which flow from the general observance of this duty, that leads us to abstain from the property of others, however much it might seem capable of contributing to our own gratification, would surely be a superfluous labour. Indeed, in picturing to you the advantages which flow from the very inequality of property itself, I have already sufficiently exhibited to you the benefit of the principle which respects property, and of the duty which consists in our conformity to this principle; a duty without which, indeed, the mere acknowledgment of the various things possessed, as things of which the possession ought not to be violated, would be of no avail. The general feelings of mankind, with respect to the importance of this duty, are indeed sufficiently shown in the laws which they have established for punishing the breach of it. Even under our own excellent legal system, in which death is appointed to him who premeditates and executes the death of another, it is appointed also to him who has assailed the property only, not the person; and politically and morally erroneous as this equal allotment of punishment to offences so unequal most truly is, it still marks sufficiently the general feeling of the evil which would arise to society from the frequent violation of this simple duty, that such an allotment of punishment should still continue in such a nation, and in such an age.

When we consider the multitude who are in possession of means of enjoyment, that are to them the means only of selfish avarice or of profligate waste,—in both cases, perhaps, productive rather of evil than of good to the individual possessor,—and when, at the same time, we consider the multitudes, far more numerous, to whom a small share of that cumbrous and seemingly unprofitable wealth would, in an instant, diffuse a comfort that would make the heart of the indigent gay in his miserable hovel,

and be like a beam of health itself to that pale cheek which is slowly wasting on its wretched bed of straw, in cold and darkness, and a famine that is scarcely felt, only because appetite itself is quenched by disease ; it might almost seem to the inconsiderate, at least for a moment, in contemplating such a scene, that no expression of the social voice could be so beneficial as that which should merely say, Let there be no restraint of property, but let all the means of provision for the wants of mankind be distributed according to the more or less imperious necessity of those wants which all partake. It requires only the consideration of a moment, however, to perceive that this very distribution would itself be the most injurious boon that could be offered to indigence ; that soon, under such a system of supposed freedom from the usurpations of the wealthy, instead of the wealth which supports and the industry which is supported, the bounty which relieves and the penury that is relieved, there would only be one general penury, without the possibility of relief ; and an industry that would be exercised, not in plundering the wealthy, for there could not then be wealth to admit of plunder, but in snatching from the weaker some scanty morsel of a wretched aliment that would scarcely be sufficient to repay the labour of the struggle to him who was too powerful not to prevail. The vices that would tyrannize uncontrolled in such an iron age I do not attempt to picture. I speak only of the mere physical wants of man, and of the means which different states of society afford for the gratification of those wants according as possession is more or less secured, though no other original difference were supposed, than of the simple right of property. There would be no palaces, indeed, in such a system of equal rapine ; and this might be considered as but a slight evil, from the small number of those who were stripped of them ; but when the chambers of state had disappeared, where would be the cottage, or rather the whole hamlet of cot-

tages that might be expected to occupy its place? The simple dwellings of a happy peasantry might be the last, indeed, to be invaded; but when the magnificent mansion had been stripped by the first band of plunderers, these, too, would soon find plunderers as rapacious. No elegant art could be exercised, no science cultivated, where the search of a precarious subsistence for the day would afford us no leisure for studies or exercises beyond the supply of mere animal wants; and man, who, with property, is what we now behold him, and is to be, in his glorious progress even on earth, a being far nobler than we are capable, in our present circumstances, of divining, would, without property, soon become, in the lowest depth of brutal ignorance and wretchedness, what it is almost as difficult for our imagination to picture to us, as it would be for it to picture what he may become on earth, after the many long ages of progressive improvement. Such is the state to which we should be reduced, if all men were to do what the robber individually does. He contributes whatever a single heart and a single arm can contribute, to make of the social and happy world around us, that unsocial and miserable world which we vainly labour to conceive. His crime is not perpetrated against an individual only, but against the very union that binds society together; and the abhorrence with which his crime is considered, is not the mere wrath that is felt by the aggrieved individual, it is the sympathizing resentment of all mankind.

LECTURE XII.

OF OUR NEGATIVE DUTIES TO OTHERS: ABSTAINING FROM ROBBING THEM OF THE AFFECTIONS OF OTHERS—OF ABSTAINING FROM INJURING THE CHARACTER OF OTHERS—OF VERACITY.

In treating of the general duties which we owe to all mankind, I considered these, in my last Lecture, as of two classes, negative and positive; the one set leading us to abstain from injuring others, the other set leading us to be actively useful to them.

An individual, it is evident, may be injured by us in various ways, with which, of course, in the obligation to abstain from the different forms of injury, there is a co-extensive variety of duty. He may be injured directly in his person, in his property, in those affections of others which are almost a species of property, — in his character, in his knowledge or belief, in his virtue, in his tranquillity.

Of these various modes of injury we have considered two. I proceed then, now, to the third in order, the injury which we may do to any one, by robbing him of the affections of those whose love may, perhaps, be to him the most precious of his possessions.

Affection, I have said, may be considered almost as a form of wealth possessed; and the most delightful affection which can be given to us, is truly, if I may apply the cold terms of merchandise to the pure commerce of the heart, a species of property for which the price of similar affection has been paid, and to which the laws of wedlock have given a legal and holy title. It is to the robbery of conjugal affection, therefore, as the most important, that I shall confine the few remarks which I have to offer on this species of injury.

If the guilt of the robber were to be estimated in proportion to the quantity of evil which he knowingly produces,

where is it that our most indignant hatred of the crime should be fixed? Not surely on him whom alone we are accustomed to denominate a robber. The wretch who perishes on the scaffold for his sordid thefts, unpitied, perhaps, by a single individual in the whole crowd of gazers, that mark the last faint convulsion of his limbs, only to wonder when the quiverings are to cease, may deserve the horrors of that ignominious punishment under which he sinks. But does he truly rank in villany with the robber of another class, — with him who would be astonished, perhaps, to have a place assigned to him among common pilferers, but who is in guilt the basest of them all, however noble he may be in titles, and splendid with all that pomp which can be alike the covering of vice and of virtue? There may pass in some stately carriage, while the crowd are still gazing on the body that hangs lifeless before them, some criminal of far deeper iniquity, whose eye too may turn where all other eyes are fixed, and who may wonder at the increase of crimes, and moralize on their causes, and rejoice at their punishment, while the carriage, in which he reclines and moralizes at his ease, is bearing him to the house of his friend, by a secret appointment with her who is the mistress of it; whom months of incessant falsehoods and treacheries were unable to subdue, but whom, by the influence of some finer simulation, he is at last to carry off, as a noble booty, from the virtue and happiness to which she never is to return.

The common thief, who steals or forces his way into the house at midnight, has never been treated with kindness and confidence by him whose property he invades; and all which he carries off may usually be repaired without very much difficulty, or may perhaps be of a kind which is scarcely of sufficient importance to our convenience to be replaced by the easy efforts that might replace it. But what is to repair the plunder of him whose robbery is of that which exists only within the heart; who steals not the

object of regard only, but the very capacity of feeling affection and confidence again, and who, by a single crime, converts, in the eyes of the sufferer, that world of social harmony, which God has made so beautiful, into a world of deceivers and the deceived; of pleasures that are but illusion, and of misery that is reality?

Let us imagine one of those domestic groups, which form, to the lover of happiness, one of the loveliest spectacles with which the earth is embellished—a family, in the small circle of which there is no need of distracting and noisy gaieties without, because there are constant tranquillity and enjoyment within; in which the pleasure of loving is, in the bosom of the wedded pair, a delight that, as blending in one uniform emotion with the pleasure of being loved, is scarcely to be distinguished from that affection which is ever flowing around it, — a delight that grows not weaker but more intense by diffusion to the little frolickers around, who as yet know little more than the affection which they feel, and the affection of which they are the objects, but who are rising into virtue amid the happiness which virtue sheds. In considering such a scene, would it require any very long and subtile effort of reflection to determine what would be the greatest injury which human malice could devise against it, if it were in the power of malice to execute every atrocity which it might conceive? It would be that very injury which the adulterer perpetrates, — the crime of him who can see all this happiness, and can say in his heart, this happiness shall exist no longer. A time may indeed come, when, if his artifices be successful, this happiness will exist no more; when she, who was once as innocent as she was happy, shall have been consigned to that remorse which is to hurry her, too slowly for her own wishes, to the grave; and when the home which she has deserted shall be a place of wretchedness and desolation; where there is one miserable being who knows his misery, and others who still smile, while they inquire anxiously,

with a sort of fearful wonder, for the presence of her whose caresses they no longer enjoy, and are as yet ignorant that a time is to arrive when they are to blush at the very name of her to whose knee and embrace of fondness they are longing to return.

When Milton describes the leader of the fallen spirits as witnessing, on his entrance into paradise, the happiness of the first pair, he knew well how necessary it was to the poetic interest which he wished us to feel in the character and enterprise even of this audacious rebel, that, in the very prospect of executing his infernal purpose, he should have some reluctance to disturb that beautiful happiness which was before his eyes.

O hell ! what do mine eyes with grief behold ?
 Into our room of bliss thus high advanced
 Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps,
 Not spirits, yet to heavenly spirits bright
 Little inferior ; whom my thoughts pursue
 With wonder, and could love, so lively shines
 In them divine resemblance, and such grace
 The hand that form'd them on their shape hath pour'd.
 Ah, gentle pair ! ye little think how nigh
 Your change approaches, when all these delights
 Will vanish and deliver ye to wo,
 More wo, the more your taste is now of joy.
 Ill-fenced your heaven to keep out such a foe
 As now is enter'd ; yet no purposed foe
 To you, whom I could pity thus forlorn,
 Though I unpitied : league with you I seek,
 And mutual amity. — Hell shall unfold,
 To entertain you two, her widest gates,
 And send forth all her kings ; there will be room,
 Not like these narrow limits, to receive
 Your numerous offspring ; if no better place,
 Thank him who puts me, loath, to this revenge
 On you who wrong me not, for him who wrong'd.
 And should I at your harmless innocence
 Melt, as I do, yet public reason just,
 Honour and empire with revenge enlarged,

By conqu'ring this new world, compels me now
To do what else, though damn'd, I should abhor.¹

It is similar happiness which the adulterer invades. But he has not the compunction of the fiend in invading it. He enters into paradise, eager to destroy. He invades it because it is happiness. In many cases it is his vanity which he seeks to gratify, far more than his sensual appetite. The beauty with which the eye is most attractive to him, is the love with which it is already beaming on another; and if there were less previous conjugal affection to be overcome, and therefore less wretchedness to be produced, by the conquest which he is ambitious of achieving, he would often forbear his seductions, and reserve them for those who may afford to his insatiable wishes of moral desolation a greater harvest of misery.

Such is the adulterer; and of all this mass of wretchedness which he produces, and of all the iniquity which can calmly meditate and plan such wretchedness, what is the palliation which he assigns? It is the violence of his love alone which he pleads. He is not aware what aggravation there is of his guilt, in that which he regards, or professes to regard, as the apology of it. If by love he mean mere sexual appetite, his excuse is of the same kind as that of the common robber, who should think that he had given a moral justification of his rapacity by describing the debaucheries which it enabled him to pursue, and the difficulty which, without his thefts, he should feel in visiting as frequently the tavern and the brothel. And if by the love which is asserted, he meant an affection more worthy of the name, what are we to think of the sincerity of his love, who, to gratify his own lust, is eager to plunge into guilt and wretchedness the very being whom he professes to regard with an interest which should have led him, if sincere, to expose himself to every thing but guilt, to save

¹ Paradise Lost, book iv. 358—392.

her from misery like that which he is intentionally preparing for her? To speak of affection, therefore, or of feelings to which he dares to give the name of affection, is on his part to double his crime. It is to confess, that while he is not merely regardless of the happiness of the husband whom he robs, but equally regardless of the happiness of her of whom he robs him, he is as completely and brutally selfish in his love, as he could be in his indifference or his hatred; and that the peace, and honour, and virtue of the being whom he professes to regard as the dearest to him in existence, are therefore as nothing, when he must either sacrifice them, or make a sacrifice, which is far more painful to him, of one of his own desires.

In the present state of manners, in which, at least among the higher orders of society, there is so very little of what was once considered as domestic life, and, in the place of its simple unpretending enjoyments, such constant and close succession of almost theatrical exhibitions, on stages on which each is to each mutually spectacle and spectator, to perform gracefully their part is as much an object of ambition to the unpaid actors and actresses, in this voluntary and unremitting drama, as it is to the actors and actresses on another stage, whose livelihood, as well as glory, depends on the number of hands which they can render by their best efforts most noisy in applause. That there is a very powerful charm in elegant manners, and in the lighter eloquence of conversation, which can adapt itself readily to every subject, from the statesmanship of the day to the flower or the feather, I am far from denying; and that, even in a moral view, from the influence which it gives to the opinions of the individual, and the easy happiness which it spreads to all around him, this excellence, frivolous as it may seem, is not to be despised, however humble and comparatively insignificant it must always be rated, when placed in the scale of merit with nobler wisdom, or still nobler excellence of the heart. One great evil of this

system of universal display, however, and of the familiar and sprightly levities which it involves, is, that where this gay excellence is of high value, the praise of it must be sought from all. To all alike must be paid those gallantries of manners which all alike are to admire. The wedded and the unwedded may thus be said to live in a constant interchange of symbols of affection, which, though understood to be mere symbols, may yet, as symbols, excite that very affection which they were never seriously intended to awake. Nor is this all. In the eagerness for general admiration, there may be a wish to excite feelings that, without amounting to love, may approach love, in the heart that is already the property of another; an assiduity of attention which, though there may be no thought of leading the way to absolute infidelity, has a great portion of the guilt of adultery itself, and may almost be considered as a minor species of it; since its object is to excite a peculiar admiration, which cannot be felt without some estrangement, or tendency to estrangement, of conjugal regard. In this way, indeed, I have no doubt that more disquietude of domestic happiness has been produced upon the whole, than by adultery itself, and produced in bosoms that would have shrunk indignantly from the solicitations of the adulterer.

The next species of general duty, to which we have to proceed, is that which relates to the character of others.

The extent of the injury which we may occasion to any one, by wounding his reputation, is not to be estimated merely by the advantages which a pure and honourable character directly affords. It is necessary to take into account also the value, above even its high intrinsic excellence, which every individual, from the very constitution of our common nature, is led to attach to it. The conscience of the virtuous is, indeed, in one sense of the word, sufficient to itself. It cannot be unhappy, while afflictions are all from without, and

there is no self-reproach within to lay open the bosom to their cruel power ; yet, even to the virtuous, the approving voice of those who are moving along with them in their earthly path, is one of the most pleasing accessions which their happiness can receive ; and to rob them of this voice, or to convert it into murmurs or whispers of reprehension, is to do all the evil which malice, that cannot rob them of the consciousness of merit itself, is able to effect. The consciousness itself, indeed, is happily not within the power of the calumniator. But if it were within his power, who can doubt that that power would be gladly exercised ; that he who defames, at the risk of detection, would, if the virtues of others were submitted to his will, prevent all peril of this kind, by tearing from the heart every virtue, of which he must now be content with denying the existence, and thus at once consign his victim to ignominy, and rob him of its only consolation ? So hateful, indeed, to the wicked, is the very thought of moral excellence, that, if even one of the many slanderers with whom society is filled, had this tremendous power, there might not be a single virtue remaining on the earth.

The evil, however, which calumny can do to those whose virtue is scarcely in need of any support from public approbation, is slight, when compared with the evil which it may produce to those whose weaker virtue is mixed with much imperfection, that affords an easy pretext for censure, even when censure is unmerited ; while the loss of the encouraging regard of others is more injurious, when withheld from frailty, that, even when it wishes to do what is worthy of praise, is too ready to fall, without the support to which it clings. The real imperfections of mankind are, therefore, delightful to the heart of the slanderer, who sees in them only a warrant for all those additional charges of guilt or error which it may be his interest to add to the real amount. They are the elements of the poison which he

prepares, without which he would have as little power to cloud the moral scene, as the enchantresses of ancient fable would have had to obscure the sun, or bring down the moon from the sky, without the baleful herbs that were essential to the incantation.

It is our duty, I will not say only to love the good, but even with our indignation against the wicked to mix some portion of pity, that pity which would lead us always to wish, that even their names could still be added to the list of the virtuous. If such be our duty then, what are we to think of those who, far from pitying the wicked, would gladly double all their atrocities, and who, still farther from loving the good, would point them out, as the wicked, to public execration? There is one species of atrocity, indeed, which such malignant industry does not fail to render clear; but it would be well for him who exhibits it if that guilt were the guilt of others.

“He of whom ye delight to speak evil,” says a sententious French moralist, “may become acquainted with what you have said, and he will be your enemy; he may remain in ignorance of it, and, even though what you have said were true, you would still have to reproach yourself with the meanness of attacking one who had no opportunity of defending himself. If scandal is to be secret, it is the crime of a coward; if it is to become known, it is the crime of a madman.”¹ The moral dilemma in this argument is, indeed, addressed to one who may be supposed to have still a love of virtue in general, and a detestation of that which it would be cowardly to do; but even those who are insensible to the better motive, may feel at least the force of the selfish one; and if the secret history of the hearts of all the malignant were known, and the feelings also known, with which they are universally regarded,—it would appear in the estimate of all which is gained and all which is lost,

¹ De St. Lambert, *Œuv. Philosophiques*, tome ii. p. 251.

that detraction is truly madness or folly, as much as it is guilt.

But, if the tale which we love to whisper be just, can it be a crime to lament over guilt that is real? It is not a crime to lament over guilt, if we do lament over it. But if we do truly lament over the probable appearances of it, we shall not be very eager to circulate a doubt that may be injurious, till we have reason ourselves, not to doubt merely, but to believe. I do not wish to recommend that weakness of humanity, which, in the world, often passes current for virtue, though it implies rather a defect of moral feeling, than any refinement of it,—or which at least, if it be virtue, is a virtue that can hear of oppression, and even witness it, without feeling indignation against the oppressor; and which rather would see a thousand repetitions of the injury, than give to the wicked the name and the odium which he deserves. When crimes are walking secretly in darkness, as much as when they present themselves proudly in the very sunshine of day, it is our duty, to the innocent who have suffered, to give them the consolation of our sympathy, in the indignant feeling of their wrongs, as it is our duty to the innocent who may suffer, to call them to beware. Even in denouncing guilt, however, the office which we exercise is an office of duty not of pleasure. It is to be exercised, not with the eagerness of one who rejoices in discovering something which he may condemn, but with the sorrow of a lover of humankind, who is forced to add another moral ill to the catalogue of human delinquencies. Such are the feelings of a generous spirit, even when the vice which it discovers is of a species that implies more than ordinary moral turpitude; and when it discovers only such foibles as are not inconsistent with the ordinary proportion of human virtue, it will love rather to speak of the virtue than of the failing; it will think not of what the individual is only, but of what human nature is; and will not withhold from one the indulgence which it must extend

to all, and of which it must even, on some occasions, have too good reason for wishing the extension to itself.

When the propagators of tales of scandal think that they have completely justified themselves, by declaring that all which they have said is true, they forget that there are virtues of which they are silent, that are true, as well as the defects of which they speak with such minute and exact remembrance ; and that, if they were to omit all notice of what is excellent in a character, and to cull only what is defective, the most illustrious of mankind, without any positive violation of biographic truth, might soon cease to be illustrious.

When detraction arises from envy, malice, or motives of sordid interest, it is evident that it can be cured only by the cure of the passions from which it springs. But though these, at first sight, might seem to be the common sources of defamation, it is to another source that it is chiefly to be traced ; to the mere flippancy of the gay and the idle, and the necessity of filling up with amusement of some sort a conversation that would flag but for this ever ready resource. In these circumstances, nothing is so quick to present itself as the fault of another, even though we may have fairly begun with speaking of his virtues. “ What pleasure, it has been truly said, can two or three persons have together, who have no mutual esteem, whose hearts are as void of feeling as their heads are void of ideas ! What charm could their conversation possess without the aid of a little scandal ! The sacrifice of a third person is almost always the chief pleasure of a tête-à-tête. A vain idler, who would otherwise be as wearisome to every body as he is weary of himself, speaks to men and women of the same character. He flatters, at the expense of the absent, their vanity and their envy ; he thus animates their languor, and they pay him in the same coin. If he is gifted with some imagination, and can express agreeably the flattering things which he wishes to appear to think of you, and the

evil which he thinks of others, he is treated and caressed, becomes the favourite of every circle, and will continue for his whole life to cultivate the talent of slandering gracefully." ¹

There is considerable truth in a remark of another French writer, to the same purport, "That there is now-a-days less scandal than there was formerly, because there is more play. Cards," he says, "have saved more reputations than a whole host of itinerant preachers could have done, though their only business had been to preach against evil-speaking. But we cannot play always; and, therefore, we must sometimes amuse ourselves with a little defamation."

The moral conclusion to be drawn from this remark is, that what cards may thus have tended in part to do, may be effected by other better means. If scandal arise in a great measure from poverty of conversation, it will diminish in proportion as minds become more cultivated, so as not to have every subject of discussion exhausted, when the health of the visiter and of the visited, having once been ascertained, cannot again with any decency be made a subject of inquiry, and when the meteorology of the day and of the season has, after a little debate, been settled in all its physical exactness. It is to this general increase of mental cultivation that the lessening of scandal is to be attributed, far more than to mere card-playing; which, even when the use of cards was more prevalent than now, could afford only a suspension of hostilities that were ever ready to begin again with new violence when the game was finished, with perhaps a little additional bitterness on the part of the losers, against the vices of the wicked, and the frailties of the weak. The only true and permanent source of peace and amity with the faults of the absent, is that interest in better subjects which enables the present

¹ De St. Lambert, Œuv. Phil. tome ii. p. 250.

to animate their conversation, and to sustain it in rich variety, without the necessity of wandering to that last resource which marks the folly of the head still more than the uncharitableness of the heart. It is pleasing to trace in this, as in all its other influences, the connexion of intellectual culture with the virtues which it not merely embellishes but invigorates; to perceive that philosophy which, in senates and councils, teaches purer humanity to statesmen and kings, extend its gentle influence to the private circle, and diffuse a more amiable cheerfulness on the very pleasures of the gay.

The next duty of which we have to treat is that of veracity, which relates to the knowledge or belief of others, as capable of being affected by the meanings, true or false, which our words or our conduct may convey; and consists in the faithful conformity of our language, or of our conduct when it is intended tacitly to supply the place of language, to the truth which we profess to deliver, or, at least, to that which is at the time believed by us to be true.

So much of the happiness of social life is derived from the use of language, and so profitless would the mere power of language be, but for the truth which dictates it, that the abuse of the confidence which is placed in our declarations, may not merely be in the highest degree injurious to the individual deceived, but would tend, if general, to throw back the whole race of mankind into that barbarism from which they have emerged, and progressively ascended through still purer air and still brighter sunshine to that noble height which they have reached. It is not wonderful, therefore, that veracity, so important to the happiness of all, and yet subject to so many temptations of personal interest in the violation of it, should, in all nations, have had a high place assigned to it among the virtues.

That, in the case of a virtue, so essential to the commerce of life, man should have been led instinctively to the practice of it, would not of itself appear absurd, or even

very wonderful, to those who consider the other instructive tendencies in our constitution ; and since all, in uttering falsehood, are conscious of an effort which represses the truth that seems to start of itself to the lips, and all seem to believe what is told them, till the experience of frequent deceit have induced some degree of doubt in the young listener, who begins to be a sceptic, it has been supposed, by many philosophers, that there are, in our nature, two instinctive tendencies adapted to each other, — a tendency to speak truth, and a tendency to believe what is spoken.

On this subject it is perhaps not very easy to decide with absolute confidence ; since it must be admitted by all, that, whether there were, or were not, such original tendencies in the mind, they now do truly form a part of it, — that we have a disposition to speak truth, as often as we speak, without any positive motive to be deceitful ; and a disposition to believe what is related to us, if in the circumstances of the relater there be no obvious interest in falsehood, and in the circumstances of the narrative itself no apparent improbability. But since principles are not to be multiplied without urgent necessity, I confess that I do not see, in the phenomena of veracity and belief, sufficient reason to assert peculiar instincts, as concerned in the production of them, since they admit of a sufficient explanation by other more general principles.

That there is a love of society in man, and a desire of sympathetic feeling in the society that is loved, I am far from denying ; and if this general love of sympathy with our feelings, to which truth contributes, were all which is meant by the assertors of instinctive veracity, it would be absurd to object to the principle. But this is not what is meant by the assertors of the doctrine. The tendency of which they speak is an instinct additional ; and it is to this additional instinct only that the remarks which I have to offer are meant to be applied.

If in our inquiry we are to go back to the very origin of

language, it may be presumed that some want, or wish, would be felt when words were uttered. The very motive, therefore, which led to the use of speech, would lead to the truth of it; since no wish could be attained by the use of language, unless the wish were truly expressed. It surely cannot seem wonderful that the expression of wants should be sincere; though it might, indeed, have seemed very wonderful if, with the wish of obtaining food from a brother savage, the savage had employed his power of utterance only to declare that he was not hungry. He might speak falsehoods on some occasion, indeed, on the same principle as that which led him on ordinary occasions to be sincere; that is to say, from the influence of a powerful desire. He would have some secret wish to gratify by the deceit, and, having this wish, he might say what was not, as he was before in the habit of saying what was.

What is true of the savage is true of the child. He too has wishes to gratify; and he speaks truth, because the expression of his wishes must be truth. Nor is this all: The simple laws of suggestion, on which the use of arbitrary signs depend, have themselves an obvious relation to veracity, that connects the utterance of the tongue with the emotions of the heart. Language, as a mere series of symbols, is associated with certain feelings. The feeling of warmth, for example, is more closely associated with the verbal sign that expresses it, than with any other of the various signs of which language is composed; and when we think of this feeling, the word "warmth" will occur more readily than any other. It is the same with all our other feelings. They suggest, of themselves, by mere association, the corresponding phrases expressive of them; and truth is the result of this very suggestion. We are conscious of an effort in speaking falsehood, because, but for this effort, our feelings would of themselves suggest their corresponding signs; and we have thus to repress the truth that rises spontaneously, and to invent laboriously the combinations

of words that are in discord with our belief. What wonder is there that, when we walk through a meadow in a sunny evening of autumn, there should arise to the mind, and thus to ready utterance, phrases expressive of the real feelings—How beautiful is this scene, and how happy these cattle appear!—rather than phrases which have no connexion with the real feelings, and which cannot be supposed, therefore, to be readily uttered, because they are not readily suggested; phrases which would say, What a scene of ruggedness and sterility is this before us, and how terrible are those wolves and tigers! When the common laws of association are reversed, by which things signified suggest their signs, as conversely signs suggest the objects or feelings which they signify, — then, indeed, it may be necessary, in accounting for the accordance of words and sentiments, to have recourse to a peculiar instinct of veracity.

There seems, then, no necessity for a peculiar instinct to account for the general tendency to speak truth rather than falsehood, independently of all moral consideration of the difference of truth and falsehood; though this moral feeling in aid of the common principle of association, and of the general love of sympathy, is certainly an important element in the habitual production of truth. As little reason does there appear to be for the supposition of a peculiar corresponding instinct of credulity. All which seems necessary to account for this, is the influence of common experience.

If there be, as we have seen, some very obvious reasons to account for the tendency to speak truth, those who hear must, for the same reason, be hearers of truth; and they who are in the constant, or almost constant, habit of hearing truth, will of course, from the same principle which directs their reasoning in other cases, soon learn to draw the conclusion, that what is said may be regarded almost with certainty to be true. It would be as wonderful that they should not draw this conclusion as to general truth, from the general concurrence of the phenomena, as that

they should not draw a similar general conclusion with respect to any of the laws of nature in which a similar concurrence was discovered. If all men had universally spoken truth, all men would universally, in consequence of this uniform connexion, have believed truth ; or if we deny this consequence, it would really be difficult for us to explain why we do not put our hand as readily in the fire as in water, or jump down a precipice with as little fear as we walk along a plain. But all men do not speak truth as certainly as fire burns ; and therefore we believe in the one case with some little doubt, in the other case with certainty. It seems to us more probable that what is said to us is true, than that it is untrue ; the probability increasing, in our estimation, according to the circumstances in which we have previously found truth to be most exactly conformable to the declarations made, and in many cases making a near approximation to absolute certainty ; because in cases of the same sort, we have rarely, if ever, discovered any disagreement of the fact and the assertion. That, even if we possess the instinctive credulity supposed, we yet do not believe every thing which is told us, must be admitted by those who contend for the principle. And why do we not believe whatever is told us ? The only answer which can be given by them is, that we do not believe every thing because we have occasionally been deceived : and if the doubt can be explained by the experience of the small number of instances in which we have been deceived, why may not the tendency to the moderate assent, that is tempered by this little mixture of doubt, be admitted to arise, in like manner, from our experience of the greater number of instances in which we have not been deceived ?

That we should be more credulous in childhood than in mature life, is not wonderful, when we consider that the probabilities of truth are always far greater than the probabilities of falsehood ; that the discovery of many of the possible motives to falsehood, on which our doubt in

after-life is founded, requires an analysis much nicer than children can be supposed to perform ; and that it is the very nature of the mind, when untrained to habits of reflection, to think only of the majority of cases when the number is very greatly superior, and to forget the few exceptions. The general analogies of a language are, in this way, made absolutely universal by a child, as they are in many instances, too, so regarded by the vulgar, who understand, indeed, the irregular inflections when pronounced, but continue, in their own discourse, to employ the more general forms of termination in the particular substantives and verbs, in which grammatical usage requires a departure from the ordinary rules of inflection. The child will learn to doubt better as he will learn to speak more idiomatically ; but still the too regular language which he uses does not flow from any peculiar instinct, nor does the too regular belief.

The only original principle that seems to me to be truly concerned in the phenomena of veracity, at least the only principle in addition to the general social propensity by which we delight in the sympathy of others, is the susceptibility of moral emotion, to the influence of which, in aiding habits of truth, I have already alluded. We feel that in injuring another in his belief we are guilty of what is morally wrong ; as we feel that we are guilty of moral wrong in injuring any one, however slightly, in his person or his property. We abstain from the one species of injury, therefore, as we abstain from the other ; and though I cannot think that we speak truth, from an instinctive propensity that is independent of all experience or reflection, I have no doubt that we speak it, in many cases, from a moral disapprobation of deceit, which is itself the result of a tendency as truly original as any of our instincts.

LECTURE XIII.

OF OUR NEGATIVE DUTIES CONTINUED :—OF ABSTAINING FROM INJURING THE VIRTUE OF OTHERS, EITHER DIRECTLY BY OUR SEDUCTIONS, OR INDIRECTLY BY OUR EXAMPLE—OF ABSTAINING FROM INJURING THE MENTAL TRANQUILLITY OF OTHERS.

IN my last Lecture, in prosecution of the inquiry on which we had entered into the great class of negative duties, I considered those which relate to our power of injuring others in three very important respects: in the affection of those whom they love—in their general reputation—and in their knowledge or belief, as affected by the confidence which they attach to our false declarations. There still remain two other modes of injury to be considered by us, in the two corresponding negative duties to which they give rise.

Of these, the next in order is the dangerous power which we may exercise over the virtue of another.

This power over the virtues of others may be exercised in two ways; directly by our seductions; indirectly by our example.

The very name seduction excites immediately the thought of one particular form of allurements to guilt, to which that name is peculiarly affixed; and which deserves this peculiar distinction, by the amount of irreparable injury that may thus be produced by the persuasion of a few fatal moments. The remarks, however, which I made in my last Lecture on the crime of adultery, are in many respects so applicable to this, as to render superfluous any long discussion of the evil which the seducer perpetrates, and of the selfishness which must be in the heart before it could meditate so much evil. There is not, indeed, in simple seduction, the theft of affection belonging to another, of which the adulterer is guilty; but there is the theft of the

affection of the individual herself, the fraudulent acquisition of it by falsehoods and artifices, which in every other species of intercourse would be universally considered as lasting disgrace ; and which are surely not less disgraceful when the wretchedness produced by the fraud is far greater than any other fraud could produce, and is the wretchedness of one of whom man, who betrays her fondness, was appointed the protector. Whatever other consequences may attend the treachery of the seducer, there is, as in adultery, at least in almost every case, the production of misery to more than the individual directly betrayed ; to a whole family perhaps, that lose in a single moment, as if by some sudden desolation or total change of scene, whatever was delightful in the thought of the past, or a promise of delight in the thought of the future ; and that must either cease to love one whom it would be agony to abandon, or retain a love that involves more intense and lasting anguish, because it is the love of one who never can be happy. But, though there were no parent or friend to share her sufferings, and to aggravate them to her by this very participation, there is still the great sufferer herself, the production of present guilt, and future shame and misery, that admit almost as little of consolation as of remedy, to one, for whom the producer of all this moral depravation and anguish of heart professes feelings which he honours with the name of love, and who, in the dreadful sacrifices which she has made, has shown too strongly the force of that attachment of which he has availed himself to render her his victim. If it be justly considered as adding tenfold horror to the crime of murder, that he on whom death was inflicted was a friend and benefactor of the assassin, and forgave the deadly blow even while he recognised the arm from which it came, what weight of guilt does the very love which, even after ruin, still lingers in her gentle heart that was betrayed, add to the atrocious selfishness of him who rejoiced to perceive the tenderness

of love, only as a proof that his artifices had not been wasted ; who, in abandoning her afterwards to all her misery, regretted only the difficulty which he might have in shaking off a love so obstinate ; and on receiving, perhaps, one of those letters of upbraiding, in which, in the very vehemence of indignation, it is still evident that it is love which upbraids, — could see those gleams of tenderness, with no other thought than that of gratified vanity, — a conscious pride of attractions, which might succeed with other hearts, as they had succeeded with that heart, over which they still retained so lasting a hold.

The period which intervenes between the first artifices of the seducer, and the misery to which he is ultimately to give occasion, surely does not lessen his guilt, as a moral agent, deliberately planning those very means of wretchedness. Let us imagine, then, gathered into one terrible moment, all this amount of wretchedness, — the distraction of parents, the tears of sisters, the shame and remorse of the frail outcast ; or perhaps, in the dreadful progress of depravation of what once was shame and remorse, a wild excess of guilt, that seeks only to forget the past, and that scarcely knows, in the distraction of many acquired vices, what it is which constitutes at the moment the anguish which it feels : if all this combination of miseries could be made visible, as it were, to the very eyes of the seducer in a single moment, and the instant production of it were to depend on a single word of renewed solicitation on his part ; what love, I will not say, but even what passion that calls itself love, in any human breast, can we conceive to be so unmoved by such a sight, as to utter calmly a word so destructive ? And if a single moment of the miserable result be so dreadful to be contemplated, how much more terrible is it when regarded as the misery of years — of years that, after their course of earthly wretchedness is finished, consign to immortality a spirit, that, but for the guilt of him who rendered it what it is, might have looked

back upon the earth with the calm pleasure of those who turn their eyes on a scene which their acts of virtue have rendered delightful, and quit it only for scenes which they are to render delightful, by the continuance of similar acts, or wishes of virtue.

It is this species of seduction of the purity of female love, as I have said, to which the name is usually attached. But there are vicious seductions of as many kinds as there are vicious objects to be obtained by vicious means. He who knowingly and wilfully lessens a single virtue in the heart of another, or introduces into it a single vice, or increases the power of any guilty passion, is a seducer; guilty himself to the extent at least, or more than the extent, of the guilt which he occasions. The flatterer is a seducer; and, in thinking of flattery, we are not to think only of the courts of kings, and of the palaces of those who have almost the splendour of kings. There is a scale, which comprehends in it all mankind; a scale of the great, who are great to those beneath them, as they are little to those above them; and every where there are flatterers, because at every point of the scale there is some little power or patronage, which can gratify some little desire, that corresponds with the gifts which the flatterers of flatterers can offer to those who pay to them a similar homage. As it would be difficult to find any one too great to be the subject of adulation, it would be difficult also to find one too little to be the subject of it, if only we could find one still meaner, who might look to him with hope. Of the various corruptions, therefore, with which virtue may be assailed, flattery is not merely one of the most powerful, but the most general of all; because it is at once the most easy to be offered, and the surest to be received. "We believe that we hate flattery," says La Rochefoucault, "when all which we hate is the awkwardness of the flatterer." It is the very nature of this species of blandishment, as has been truly remarked, to please even when rejected; and

however frequently refused admission, to be admitted at last. "Habent hoc in se naturale blanditiæ : etiam cum rejiciuntur placent ; sæpe exclusæ, novissime recipiuntur."

Flattery, then, the fosterer of vanity, and often of affections more degrading, implies, in whatever station the flatterer and the flattered may be, a disregard of the virtue of others, which in itself is no slight vice. But the sly bribery of praise is not the only bribery with which human selfishness would strive to seduce human selfishness. There are grosser bribes, which those who count themselves honourable men, and are aspiring to stations of still higher honour, have no hesitation in employing for the furtherance of useful vice. A little perjury, real or implied, is all which they require ; and they are content to pay for it its fair market price, or even to raise a little the market price, if perjury should have grown more reluctant than before, or more skilful in the calculation of its own exact value. It is painful to think, that an offence against public morals, of such serious import, should be so lightly estimated by those who strive to forget their own delinquency, in the equal and familiar delinquency of others ; as if the very wideness of guilt were not an additional reason for ceasing to contribute to that which has been already so extensively baneful ; — and that the first step to the legislation of the freest and most virtuous nation on the earth, to the noblest of all the trusts which a nation can bestow,—that of enacting the means by which its own tendencies to guilt may be lessened,—should, in so many instances, be the purchase of a crime, or of many crimes.

If, however, the purchase even of a few crimes be an offence so worthy of reprehension, not merely for the encouragement which it gives to the venal barterers of their conscience, but still more for the corruption of moral principle which it tends to diffuse through the whole community, what deeper reprobation belongs to those to whom this general debasement of a people is itself an object of

desire ; who can see millions sunk in ignorance, and in all the vices of ignorance, and know the means which might have accelerated their moral progress, and rejoice with a secret triumph that they have been instrumental in withholding them. How many nations are there on the earth, in which nothing is so much feared by those who have the miserable charge of the general servitude, as that man should become a little nobler than it is possible for him to be, when he has to bow his head at the feet of the oppressor ; and in which the diffusion of knowledge is dreaded, as the diffusion of that which the slave cannot feel long, and continue to be a slave. To withhold, for purposes of selfish gain, the means by which the moral condition of a state might be ameliorated, is to be guilty of an injury to virtue, compared with the atrocity of which, the guilt of seducing to vice a single individual, is as insignificant as would be the crime of a single assassination, compared with the butchery of millions in the massacre of a whole nation, of which none were to survive but the murderers themselves, and those by whom the murder was sanctioned and applauded.

The various species of seduction which we have been considering, have had some object of direct personal gain in view. The betrayer of female innocence has previously yielded himself to the control of appetites and passions, that are to him what reason and morality are to the good, and that must be gratified, though he seek the gratification of them in misery itself. The flatterer seeks the favour of him whom he flatters, and seeks it usually for interests, without which the mere favour would be of little value to him. The briberies of money, or place, or pension, present or future, near or remote, or whatever else can be offered to the rapacity of avarice or ambition, or of all the passions which avarice and ambition can gratify, are not gifts or promises that are gratuitous, but expect a return of profit of some sort to the passions of the briber. Even those who delight in keeping nations in ignorance and servility, and

who care not how many vices may accompany or flow from these, still see the connexion of servility as an effect, with ignorance as a cause; and, perhaps, would have no great objection to allow a little more wisdom to a people, if they were to become more obsequious by their wisdom, or to remain even as truly slaves in heart as before. There is one species of corruption, however, which is exercised from a love of the corruption itself, or at least from the mere pleasure of companionship in guilt, — a spirit of malicious proselytism, which forms the last dreadful stage of vice; when the gray-headed veteran of debaucheries that began in youth, and have been matured by a long life of unceasing excess in all that is gross and depraved, till he have acquired a sort of oracular gravity of profligacy among gayer profligates, collects around him his band of youthful disciples, whom he has gathered wherever his watchful eye could mark out another victim; relates to them the tales of merriment of other years, as an excitement to present passions; observes in each the few virtues which will need even yet to be repressed, the irresolute vices that will require to be strengthened; and, if on some ingenuous cheek a blush should still arise, marks it with a sort of joy, that almost calculates the moment of triumph when that blush shall have been washed away, to appear again no more. If there be a being on this earth whom it is permitted to us to hate with full and absolute detestation, it is surely a human demon like this; and, if we could trace through all its haunts the licentiousness of a single great city, — from the splendid gaming-house of the rich to the obscure chambers of vulgar riot, in which the dissolute of another order assemble to plan the frauds or robberies of the night, or to turn to the only uses to which they know how to turn them, the frauds or robberies of the preceding day, — of how many demons of this class should we trace the horrible power, in the lessons which they are giving, and the results of lessons which have been given!

With these circumstances, which lead to the intentional and wilful corruption of others, is unfortunately often joined the vanity of a display of profligacy, surpassing the conception of ordinary profligates, or the equally hurtful vanity of an audacious wit, that can dare to jest, where others, if they do not revere as the pure revere, are at least accustomed to tremble as the superstitious tremble. How many are there who assume the appearance of this audacity which they do not feel, shuddering perhaps with a secret horror of conscience at the very epigram in which they seem to have been gaily impious, when they poured out their merry obscenities, or still merrier blasphemy. There are other minds, which have a due abhorrence of all such blasphemy, when the blasphemy is in verse ; who require most rigidly that it be in prose, and have too great regard for the virtue and holiness of man, to allow them to be corrupted by the licentious iniquity of rhyming. If, however, they can invent an argument which may logically make man miserable by mood and figure,—an argument that, to those who are not very nice distinguishers of truth, and the semblance of truth, may seem to prove God to be only a sort of poetic personification, and virtue and immortality to be words as meaningless, — they have no hesitation in supposing that the happiness of mankind, which the credit of an epigram should not be allowed to outweigh, is yet too light in the scale to be poised against the credit of any acute sophistry that can be wrought into the form of a philosophic dissertation. They are too wise not to discern that the evident tendency of that which they value only as acute, is to corrupt human virtue, and extinguish the best hopes and consolations of human suffering. But it is sufficient comfort to them, that if they render miserable those whose virtue they corrupt, they have at least not corrupted them without the observance of some of the most exact technicalities of logic.

Such are various forms of direct corruption, in which we

are seducers to vice. It is not by direct and intentional corruption only, however, that we produce injury to the virtue of others. There is an indirect influence, which, in some situations, is not less injurious,—the influence of example.

We are formed to live together in society ; and in those who are to live together, it is necessary for happiness, and almost for social union, that there should be some resemblance of manners, and agreement of sentiment, at least in the general subjects in which the interests of all are equally involved. To this agreement the various humours of mankind, and the very different circumstances in which different individuals of the same society are placed, would seem indeed to oppose causes of division that are almost insuperable. By one principle of the mind, however, — the principle of suggestion, or, as it is commonly termed, the principle of association,—nature has in a great measure softened down the most prominent and offensive peculiarities. What we have seen done in one situation, is recalled to us by the very feeling of this situation, when we are placed in it ; and, as it arises to us thus more readily, and is sometimes, perhaps, the only mode of conduct which arises clearly to our mind, we proceed on it without farther reflection, and act in a certain manner, because others have acted in a certain manner, and because we have seen them act, or heard of their action. It is evident, that in resolving to act in a certain manner, on any occasion we must have had a previous conception of the manner in which the action may be performed ; and that we may, therefore, often prefer one mode of action, from the advantages which it seems to present, when it would not have been preferred in competition with other modes of action, still more advantageous, but not conceived at the time. The wise, indeed, on this very account, even when they see good that may flow from one mode of conduct, pause to consider various possibilities, and appreciate the differences of the good and the better ; but how few are the wise!

and how much more numerous they who, when any immediate good presents itself, do not wait to consider whether a better may not be found. The first conceptions that arise are the conceptions which regulate half their conduct ; and these first conceptions, when the circumstances of the case are similar, are, by the natural influence of association, the conceptions either of what they have themselves done before, or of what others were observed to do in those similar circumstances. It is impossible to will any particular action, without having previously conceived that particular action ; and the various consequences of various modes of conduct have seldom entered into the contemplation of the multitude. They see what others do ; and their thought has scarcely wandered beyond what is commonly before their eyes, or what is the subject of common discourse. As soon, therefore, as similar circumstances recur, the image recurs of what has been thus familiar to them ; and it recurs more strongly and vividly, because its influence is not lessened by that of any other accompanying image. They act, therefore, as others have acted, not so much from a feeling of respect for general sentiment, as from mere ignorance, and the absence of any other conception that might give a different momentary impulse. They see only one path, and they move on, accordingly, in that only path which their dim and narrow glance is capable of perceiving.

How powerfully the conduct is influenced by any vivid conception, is shown very strikingly in those phenomena of panic terror to which I have more than once alluded for illustration, because they throw light on many of the most perplexing phenomena of the mind. When astonishment is once produced in any very lively degree, however rich in knowledge a mind may have been, it is, for the moment, like the ignorant minds around. It cannot deliberate and choose, because no objects of choice occur to it. What is called presence of mind, is only such a state of mastery of the feeling of astonishment, and other lively emotions, as

allows the conceptions to arise which would have arisen if there had been no circumstances productive of lively emotion ; and the want of presence of mind is the temporary want of such conceptions, from the overwhelming influence of one lively emotion. The image of what others are doing, is therefore the only image before the mind ; and each individual thus augments and multiplies the panic, by presenting to others the ready image of that flight, which, as presented to him by those who were first to fly, had made him for the moment that cowardly thing which, in hours of freer choice, he would have conceived it impossible for him to become.

In every case of this species of moral sway, then, it is to the similar influence of mere suggestion, in presenting to us a clear image of one mode of conduct out of many possible modes, that are not conceived so distinctly, because they have never been seen, that I am inclined to ascribe the chief part of that power which is attributed, and justly attributed, to example ; though to this direct influence of the principle must be added various indirect and auxiliary influences of it, in the notions of moral worth, or dignity of character, of those who performed the action before ; or the remembrance even of accidental circumstances of pride or pleasure, that may have been connected with it. When all the direct and indirect influences of the suggesting principle, then, are added together, it cannot seem wonderful that there should be such a propensity in the great imitator, man, to moral imitation ; and that the conduct of him who is born to-day, should depend almost as much on the nature of the minds of those who are to surround him hereafter, as on the nature of the mind that is animating his own little frame.

In considering the influence of example on national virtue, we are too apt to think only of the authority of those who are placed in eminent stations ; and to forget the more direct influence of domestic examples on those

individuals, who must always indeed be ranked as individuals, but whose virtues or vices united are the virtues or vices of the nation. The example of the great may give the primary impulse, but the force descends progressively from rank to rank; and each is affected chiefly by those who are around him, or a very little above him. The parents who hang over our cradle, thinking for us, before we have formed what can be called a thought, and who continue, during life, to be viewed by us with a peculiar sort of tender veneration, which no other created being seems to us entitled to possess,—the comrades of our pastimes in boyhood, and the friends who partake with us the graver occupations, and graver pastimes of our maturer years,—these are they who transfuse into us their feelings, and from whom, without thinking of them as examples, we derive all that good or evil which example can afford; and yield ourselves more completely to the influence, because we are not aware that we are yielding to any influence whatever. To be frequently with the good is to know, on almost every occasion, how the good would act in the situation in which we are placed, and to feel, at the same time, that reverence for the action itself as it seems to us recommended by their choice, which we must have felt for those whom we imagine as performers of it. Whatever impresses on us strongly the image of the virtuous, therefore, cannot be indifferent to our virtue. The very meeting of a great man, as Seneca strongly says, may be of lasting advantage to us; and we derive instruction even from his very silence. “Nulla res magis animis honesta induit, dubiosque et in pravum inclinabiles revocat ad rectum, quam bonorum virorum conversatio. Paullatim enim descendit in pectora; et vim præceptorum obtinet frequenter audiri, adspici frequenter. Occursus mehercule ipse sapientium juvat; et est aliquid, quod ex magno viro, vel te cente, proficias.”¹

¹ Senecæ Epist. xciv.

It is this universal radiation of example, reflecting light upon example, which forms the moral splendour of an age ; without some portion of the light of which good laws are powerless, and with which it is almost a matter of little moment, at least to the existing generation, how few the laws may be under which good men are living in peace. " When a citizen is inspired by the genius of virtue," says an eloquent declaimer on morals, " he feels no embarrassment in those cases for which the law has made no provision. His own heart is his legislator. He has there a species of instinct, less likely to err than even reason itself. A good man divines, as it were, good laws, that, as laws, are yet unexisting. It is not so much in the head, indeed, that the true genius of legislation has its seat, as in the heart ; and wise as Solon and Lycurgus were, who can doubt that they had still more virtue than wisdom ? When Rome was in peril, what was her resource ? She did not form new laws. She ordered the laws to be silent, and gave herself up to the guidance and example of a single good man. The conscience of Camillus was, for a long time, all the legislation of Rome. That Rome, which had scarcely begun to exist, was already almost expiring under the assault of the Gauls. But what is there which a great man cannot do, when he is sure of the courage and of the virtue of his fellow citizens ! Rome, delivered by his arm, had no longer a foe to dread ; and with her proud morals, and but a handful of laws, rose from the very brink of the grave, to march like a queen to the conquest of the universe. The firmness of Brutus, the good faith of Regulus, the moderation of Cincinnatus, the calm probity of Fabricius, the chastity of the Lucretias and Virginias, the disinterestedness of Paulus Æmilius, the patience of Fabius,—these were the best laws of Rome. A virtuous man is a living law,—he is more : precepts can only point to us what tract we should pursue, but examples hurry us along. What a difference there is between a law that speaks but

once, and Cato ever acting! This Cato was to Rome its thirteenth table of laws; and without the thirteenth, how defective would the twelve others have been!"

The influence of moral feeling is, indeed, what this author considers it to be, the supplement of the deficiencies of law; the thirteenth table of the early laws of Rome, and many volumes of statutes, where laws are more voluminous. The direct power of example, then, in those who surround us, and whose conduct is the first to rise to our conception, in all the similar circumstances in which ourselves are placed, is a power which the unreflecting can scarcely fail to obey. But though chiefly to be traced to those who mingle with us in the familiar scenes and occurrences of domestic life, the influence is yet referable in part also directly, and indirectly in a very high degree, to the smaller number, who do not so much surround us as shine upon us from a distance; the eminent of every class, whose real dignity of merit, or even whose accidental dignity of station, has raised them to a height which brings their image frequently before us; and presents it associated with all the respect which the heart readily pays to the one species of dignity, and which, for the peace and good order of states, it is necessary to pay in some degree to the other also — at least when the dignity of mere rank is not so dishonoured by the profligacy of its possessor, as to cover in our detestation of the profligacy, the feebler titles of the rank itself.

It is this moral or immoral influence, in promoting or injuring the virtues of others, an influence of which it is impossible for them to divest themselves, that gives to those who are in any way distinguished above the crowd a fearful responsibility, with which they are unfortunately not always sufficiently impressed. It is not their own conscience only for which they are answerable, they are answerable also, in some measure, for the consciences of others.

*Componitur orbis**Regis ad exemplum; nec sic inflectere sensus**Humanos edicta valent, ut vita regentis;**Mobile mutatur semper cum principe vulgus.*

“*Princeps optimus,*” says Paterculus, with a forcible brevity of expression, “*faciendo docet; et licet sit imperio maximus, exemplo major est.*”

In the life of a sovereign, then, there is nothing private. His friendships, his very amusements, are not friendships and amusements only: they are public virtue or public guilt. If he think more of the trappings of his state than of its duties; if the splendour of some courtly festival be more important to him, than that noblest of spectacles which is to be found in the general happiness of a peaceful and virtuous land; if the favourites of his private confidential hours, whom he thus offers to his people, as models of the conduct that is worthiest of being honoured, be those who are known to the world only by superior profligacy, and whom every virtuous father of a family would exclude from the dwelling of those for whose innocence he would tremble if the corrupters were admitted, there may be virtue still in that state; but it is only because there are in it principles of virtue too powerful to be overcome by the vicious authority even of the most powerful. The guilt of the sovereign, however, in such circumstances, is to be estimated, not by the vices which have spread among his people, but by the vices which his own conduct has authorized; and would not be increased in the amount of its moral delinquency, though all mankind had become, what he has said, by his example and his favour, that it is noble to be. If, however, a prince be indeed what a prince should be, he has the comfort of knowing, that he is not enjoying only the happiness of virtue, but diffusing it; that, since his actions must be lessons, they are lessons of good; and that if, by his example, he exercise a sway more extensive than that of his laws or his arms, it is a sway which, like that

of his laws and his arms, is exercised only for the happiness of the world.

An influence so extensive, indeed, belongs only to a few of mankind; but even the humble must not think, on this account, that they have no influence. It is indirectly, I have already said, as spreading through them, that the influence of the powerful is chiefly exercised. In their homes, among their friends, on all those who come within their little sphere, they exercise power over the vice or virtue of others, and thus indirectly an influence on the amount of moral good and evil in the world, in every future generation,—an influence which it is as little possible for them to shake off, as for the sovereign of many states to abdicate his moral sway, and to be a sovereign only with his sceptre or his sword.

From this inevitable influence of example, by which every moral or immoral action that is performed by us may have consequences that never entered into our design or our wish when we planned or performed it, arises one very important duty,—the duty of attending to the appearances of our actions. It is not enough for us to have willed what is virtuous, and to have executed it by means that in themselves imply no immorality, if they have been such as might lead others to suspect the purity of what was truly pure. The loss which we might ourselves suffer in this way, in our character and authority, is not the only evil, nor, in many cases, the greatest evil, of such seeming improprieties. We may, without due care as to appearances, act virtuously, and yet give all the authority of our station and character to vice,—misleading those to whom our example may have the force of precept, and, perhaps, by some of the most generous sacrifices of which our nature is capable, inducing the inconsiderate, who suppose that they are imitating us, to quit that moral good which we truly sought, for the evil which we only seemed to them to pursue.

The only remaining species of injury to others, the duty

of abstaining from which we have still to consider, is that which relates to their mental tranquillity.

This, indeed, all the other species of injury already considered by us, tend indirectly to disturb. But the injury of which I speak at present, is the direct violation of the peace of others, by our immediate intentional influence on their feelings.

In treating of the emotions of pride, particularly in the form of that haughtiness which the proud are so apt to assume, I have already treated of one of the most injurious influences of this sort, my remarks on which it would be unnecessary now to repeat. You must be sufficiently aware, that the aim of the haughty is to excite in others the mortifying feeling of their abject inferiority ; and that, if they could always produce the feelings which they wish to excite, they would not merely have all the guilt of a cruel tyranny, — for that they have, even in their most powerless wishes, but would truly, in their very effects, be the most severe of human tyrants.

It is not the insolence of the haughty, however, which is the only intentional disquieter of others. There is a power in every individual, over the tranquillity of almost every individual. There are emotions latent in the mind of those whom we meet, which a few words of ours may at any time call forth ; and the moral influence which keeps this power over the uneasy feelings of others under due restraint, is not the least important of the moral influences, in its relation to general happiness.

There are minds which can delight in exercising this cruel sway ; which rejoice in suggesting thoughts that may poison the confidence of friends, and render the very virtues that were loved, objects of suspicion to him who loved them. In the daily and hourly intercourse of human life, there are human beings who exert their malicious skill in devising what subjects may be most likely to bring into the mind of him with whom they converse, the most mortifying remembrances ;

who pay visits of condolence that they may be sure of making grief a little more severely felt; who are faithful in conveying to every one the whispers of unmerited scandal, of which, otherwise, he never would have heard, as he never could have suspected them; though, in exercising this friendly office, they are careful to express sufficient indignation against the slanderer, and to bring forward as many grounds of suspicion against different individuals as their fancy can call up; who talk to some disappointed beauty of all the splendid preparations for the marriage of her rival; to the unfortunate dramatic poet, of the success of the last night's piece, and of the great improvement which has taken place in modern taste; and who, if they could have the peculiar good fortune of meeting with any one whose father was hanged, would probably find no subject so attractive to their eloquence as the number of executions that were speedily to take place.

Such power man may exercise over the feelings of man; and as it is impossible to frame laws which can comprehend injuries of this sort, such power man may exercise over man with legal impunity. But it is a power of which the virtuous man will as little think of availing himself, for purposes of cruelty, as if a thousand laws had made it as criminal as it is immoral; a power which he will as little think of exercising, because it would require only the utterance of a few easy words, as of inflicting a mortal blow, because it would require only a single motion of his hand.

The true preservative against this power, is that which is the protector of the virtuous from all other injury—their own purity of conscience. It is not easy to excite permanently any unpleasant images in the mind of one who, in the retrospect of life, has only virtuous actions or virtuous desires to remember—who has wished to keep nothing secret from the world, but the benefactions that provided as carefully for the virtuous shame, as for the very wants

of poverty; and who, therefore, if his whole mind could become visible, would be not less, but more beloved. The tranquillity of such a mind may indeed be disturbed for a moment by the petty malice that would strive to awake in it disagreeable remembrances; but even when it may be thus disturbed, there is no painful feeling so likely to arise in it, as regret for that malice itself which it disdains, indeed, but which it cannot disdain without some accompanying pity.

LECTURE XIV.

OF OUR POSITIVE DUTIES—OF THE DUTIES OF BENEVOLENCE.

IN my last Lecture, I concluded my remarks on the order of our general duties, which are negative only; that is to say, which consist in abstinence from the different sorts of injury which it is in our power, directly or indirectly, to occasion to others.

These we considered under seven heads: as our actions may be injurious to others, in their person, in their property, in the affection of those whom they love, in their general character, in their knowledge or belief, as affected by the confidence which they place in the truth of our declarations; in their virtue, as subject to the influence of our intentional seductions, or to the unintended influence of our mere example; and lastly, in their peace of mind, which, as liable to be disturbed by mortifying reflections, that are in most cases easy to be excited, is in some measure under our control, from the power which the principle of suggestion gives us over the trains of thought of others, and consequently over the general emotions, pleasing or un-

pleasing, which result from those trains of thought, or form a part of them.

To abstain, however, from every species of injury which it is in our power to occasion to others, though it is an important part of virtue, is but a part of it. Even in our most scrupulous forbearance from all the evil which we might produce, if this abstinence, however complete, were all, the world would still be only as if we had not been. There might be before our very eyes misery, which, though not produced by ourselves, was not the less an evil, and which a slight effort on our part—a word, a very look expressive of a wish, might have been sufficient to remove. There might, in like manner, be means of easy happiness to individuals or whole families, which required only the same simple wishes on our part to convert them into happiness itself, but which would be wholly unproductive without us; and yet, if we had no feelings which led us to be more than passively and negatively good, the misery would remain unrelieved, and the happiness be unproduced or unpromoted.

Nature, then, when she conferred on us, in so many noble powers of mind and body, such abundant facilities of usefulness, did not leave us destitute of the wishes which alone could make these facilities valuable. She has given us a benevolence that desires the good of all, and a principle of moral feeling, which, when we allow an opportunity of being widely beneficial to escape, speaks to us with a voice of reproach which it is not easy for us to still. By the one we merely desire the happiness of mankind; by the other we feel that to promote this happiness of mankind is a duty.

It is in this latter aspect that we are at present to consider our power of being beneficial, as giving occasion to a duty, or set of duties, corresponding with the particular species of good, which any exertion on our part can occasion or further.

So important is this duty of benevolence, that, as I formerly mentioned, some very eminent moralists have been led to maintain, that whatever is felt by us to be virtuous, is felt to deserve that name merely as involving some benevolent desire, — an opinion which is evidently founded on a partial view of the phenomena; since the experience of every one, if he attend sufficiently to his own feelings, without regard to any system, must convince him that he has a similar emotion of moral regard, in cases in which the thought of personal duty, as in many of the noblest efforts of self-command, was all which could have been present to the mind of the agent; or in which, though it might be possible to invent some benevolent motive, as what might influence the fortitude of the heroic sufferer, the moral admiration was at least far more rapid than the tardy invention of the benevolence. The doctrine of virtue, as consisting in benevolence, false as it is when maintained as universal and exclusive, is yet, when considered as having the sanction of so many enlightened men, a proof at least of the very extensive diffusion of benevolence in the modes of conduct which are denominated virtuous. It may not, indeed, comprehend all the aspects under which man is regarded by us as worthy of our moral approbation, but it comprehends by far the greater number of them, — his relations to his fellow men, and to all the creatures that live around him, though not the moral relations which bind him to the greatest of all beings, nor those which are directly worthy of our approbation, as confined to the perfection of his own internal character.

That benevolence, the moral link which connects man with man, is in itself virtuous, may indeed appear to some very rigid questioners of every feeling, to require proof; but it can appear to require it only to those who deny altogether the very moral distinction of virtue and vice, in that general scepticism which has been already fully considered by us. Of those who allow virtue to be more than

a name, there is no one who will refuse to benevolent exertions the praise of this excellence — no one who can read the history of any of those heroes of the moral scene whose life has been one continued deed of generosity to mankind, without feeling that if there be virtue on earth, there has been virtue in that bosom which has suffered much, or dared much, that the world might be free from any of the ills which disgraced it. The strong lines with which the author of “The Botanic Garden” concludes his praise of one of the most illustrious of these heroes of benevolence, scarcely express more than we truly feel on the contemplation of such a character. It does seem as if man, when he acts as man should act, is a being of some higher order than the frail erring creatures among whom we ourselves pass a life that, with all its occasional acts of generosity and self-command, is still, like theirs, a life of frailty and error.

And now, Philanthropy, thy rays divine
Dart round the globe, from Zembla to the line ;
O'er each dark prison plays the cheering light,
Like northern lustres o'er the vault of night.
From realm to realm, with cross or crescent crown'd,
Where'er mankind and misery are found ;
O'er burning sands, deep waves, or wilds of snow,
Thy Howard, journeying, seeks the house of wo.
Down many a winding step to dungeons dank,
Where anguish wails aloud, and fetters clank,
To caves bestrew'd with many a mouldering bone,
And cells, whose echoes only learn to groan ;
Where no kind bars a whispering friend disclose,
No sunbeam enters, and no zephyr blows,
He treads, unemulous of fame or wealth,
Profuse of toil, and prodigal of health ;
With soft assuasive eloquence expands
Power's rigid heart, and opes his clenching hands ;
Leads stern-eyed Justice to the dark domains,
If not to sever, to relax the chains ;
Or guides awaken'd Mercy through the gloom,
And shows the prison, sister to the tomb ;

Gives to her babes the self-devoted wife,
To her fond husband liberty and life.
The spirits of the good who bend from high,
Wide o'er these earthly scenes, their partial eye,
When first, array'd in Virtue's purest robe,
They saw her Howard traversing the globe,
Mistook a mortal for an angel-guest,
And ask'd, what seraph foot the earth imprest.
Onward he moves. Disease and death retire,
And murmuring demons hate him and admire.¹

The benevolent spirit, as its object is the happiness of all who are capable of feeling happiness, is as universal in its efforts as the miseries which are capable of being relieved, or the enjoyments which it is possible to extend to a single human being, within the reach of its efforts, or almost of its wishes. When we speak of benefactions, indeed, we think only of one species of good action; and charity itself, so comprehensive in its etymological meaning, is used as if it were nearly synonymous with the mere opening of the purse. But "it is not money only which the unfortunate need; and they are but sluggards in well-doing," as Rousseau strikingly expresses the character of this indolent benevolence, "who know to do good only when they have a purse in their hand." Consolations, counsels, cares, friendship, protection, are so many resources which pity leaves us for the assistance of the indigent, even though wealth should be wanting. The oppressed often continue to be oppressed, merely because they are without an organ to render their complaints known to those who have the power of succour. It requires sometimes but a word which they cannot say, a reason which they know not how to state, the opening of a single door of a great man, through which they are not permitted to pass, to obtain for them all of which they are in need. The intrepid support of a disinterested virtue is, in such cases, able to remove an infinity of obstacles, and the eloquence of a single good man in the

¹ Botanic Garden, part ii. canto ii. 439-472.

cause of the injured can appal tyranny itself in the midst of its power.

If indeed there be in the heart those genuine wishes of diffusive good which are never long absent from the heart of the virtuous, there will not long be wanting occasions of exertion. It will not be easy for an eye that has been accustomed to the search of objects of generous regard, to look around without the discovery of something which may be remedied, or something which may be improved; and in relieving some misery, or producing or spreading some happiness, the good man will already have effected his delightful purpose, before others would even have imagined that there was any good to be done.

It would be a waste of time to attempt to examine, with any minuteness of analysis, the various ways in which benevolence may be usefully exerted. In considering the species of injury that give rise to our duties of a negative order, I have in some measure considered our positive duties also; since, to abstain from injuring, and to wish to promote the good which we have thus forborne to lessen, are in spirit results of the same species of benevolent regard, and of the same moral principle, that commands us to further the happiness which it would be vice, by any conduct of ours, to diminish.

To pass slightly over these objects of social regard, then, in the order in which they were before considered, the benevolent man will be eager to relieve every form of personal suffering. Public institutions arise, by his zeal, for receiving the sick, who have no home, or a home which it is almost sickness to inhabit, and for restoring them, in health, to those active employments of which they would otherwise have been incapable. In the humblest ranks of life, when no other aid can be given by the generous poor, than that which their attendance and sympathy administer, this aid they never hesitate to afford. When their own toils of the day are over, they often give the hours of a

night that is to terminate in a renewed call to their fatiguing occupations, — not to the repose which their exhausted strength might seem to demand, but to a watchful anxiety around the bed of some feverish sufferer, who is scarcely sufficiently conscious of what is around him, to thank them for their care, and whose look of squalid wretchedness seems to be only death begun, and the infection of death, to all who gaze upon it. The same benevolence which prompts to the succour of the infirm, prompts to the succour also of the indigent. Though charity is not mere pecuniary aid, pecuniary aid, when such aid is needed, is still one of the most useful, because one of the most extensive in its application, of all the services of charity. Nor is it valuable only for the temporary relief which it affords to sufferings that could not otherwise be relieved. It has a higher and more comprehensive office. It brings together those whose union seems necessary for general happiness, and almost for explaining the purposes of Heaven in the present system of things. There are every where the rich, who have means of comfort which they know not how to enjoy, and scarcely how to waste; and every where some who are poor without guilt on their part, or at least rather guilty because they are poor, than poor because they are guilty. All which seems necessary for the comfort of both is, that they should be brought together. Benevolence effects this union. It carries the rich to the cottage, or to the very hovels of the poor; it allows the poor admission into the palaces of the rich; and both become richer in the only true sense of that word, because to both there is an accession of happiness. The wealthy obtain the pleasure of doing good, and of knowing that there are hearts which bless them; the indigent obtain the relief of urgent necessities, and the pleasure of loving a generous benefactor.

Such are the delightful influences of positive benevolence, in their relation to the personal sufferings and to the

pecuniary wants of those who, if they have no property to be assailed by injustice, have at least necessities, the disregard of which is equal in moral delinquency to injustice itself. In its relation to the affections of those around, who are connected with each other by various ties of regard, benevolence is not less powerful as a producer or fosterer of good. Wherever there are causes of future jealousy among those who love each other at present, it delights in dispelling the elements of the cloud, when the cloud itself, that has not yet begun to darken, scarcely can be said to have arisen. If suspicions have already gathered in the breast of any one who thinks, but thinks falsely, that he has been injured, it is quick, with all the ready logic of kindness, to show that the suspicions are without a cause. If it find not suspicion only, but dissension that has burst out, in all the violence of mutual acrimony, it appears in its divine character of a peace-maker, and, almost by the influence of its mere presence, the hatred disappears and the love returns; as if it were as little possible that discord should continue where it is, as that the mists and gloom of night should not disappear at the mere presence of that sun which shines upon them.

“The virtuous man,” it has been beautifully said, “proceeds without constraint in the path of his duty. His steps are free; his gait is easy; he has the graces of virtue. He moves along in benevolence, and he sees arising in others the benevolence which is in him. Of all our virtuous emotions, those of kind regard are the most readily imitated. To feel them is to inspire them; to see them is to partake them. Are they in your heart? They are in your looks, in your manners, in your discourse. Your presence reconciles enemies; and hatred, which cannot penetrate to your heart, cannot even dwell around you.”¹

If benevolence is eager to preserve the affection of those

¹ De St. Lambert, *Œuvres Philosophiques*, tome iii. p. 179.

who love each other, it cannot fail to be careful of their character, on which so much of affection depends. The whispers of insidious slander may come to it as they pass—with a secrecy which has nothing in it of real secrecy but mere lowness of tone—from voice to voice in eager publication; but if there be no other voice to bear them farther, they will cease and perish when it is benevolence which has heard. It is not indeed that senseless and indifferent praiser of all actions, which cannot be said to applaud any thing, when it does not know what it is right to condemn. Benevolence itself can despise, can hate, can raise a voice of terrible indignation, when cruelty has been inflicting bodily tortures, or oppression torturing the soul. It is love, however, which is the principle of its very hatred. It hates the oppressors of those whom it loves, and it hates oppression every where, because it loves all humankind.

In loving all humankind, and wishing their happiness, it is impossible that the benevolent should not love also the diffusion of knowledge and virtue to humankind; since to wish permanent happiness without these, would be almost to wish for warmth without heat, or colours without light. In my last lecture I considered the motives which lead men to desire that the multitude of their fellow men should be kept down in a state of intellectual and moral darkness; and the motives which lead to the corruption of individuals,—those who have selfish passions to gratify, by the debasement of some pure and holy principle in some ingenuous heart, or at least in some heart not wholly corrupted, that, if suffered to remain, would be inconsistent with the selfish gratification which they seek. Such motives benevolence cannot feel. The objects which it seeks are of a kind which it would be wisdom to pursue, and virtue to pursue; and wishing, therefore, the universality of such pursuits, it cannot fail to wish, in like manner, the universality of the knowledge and virtue which would see happiness where it

is best to be found ; and would not seek it therefore where it is often sought, in misery itself, or in the certain causes of misery. It is not easy to imagine a mind that is truly desirous of the good of the world, which can sincerely, in its very desire of this good, recommend ignorance as a purifying principle, essential to the moral civilization of man, who, according to this strange system, is a savage only because he knows too much. It is not easy to give credit to the sincerity of this desire ; because one who is desirous of public good, must have felt how often, in his own actions, he has injured when he wished to benefit, merely from the want of some better light which he has since received ; and must have seen, in the history of legislation, still more striking proofs of the insufficiency of mere virtuous wishes, for the purposes of virtue, when a very little truth additional might have convinced the planner of much social improvement, that he was ignorantly retarding that very improvement which the individual interests of society itself would have produced far sooner, but for the erring patriotism that laboured to urge it on ; and that could not employ its too forcible efforts without breaking some of the delicate springs on which the beautiful mechanism of its seemingly spontaneous progress depended. He who feels in himself, then, the importance of knowledge, even to his more enlightened efforts, to be beneficial, cannot patriotically wish its light to be obscured, or resist the communication of any additional light to those few gleams which, on the greater portion of the surface of the earth, even in nations which we term civilized, show the multitude how to use their hands, indeed, in offices of labour, but scarcely serve to show them more. The virtue of mankind, and the general knowledge which invigorates that virtue, and renders it more surely useful — these are the greatest objects which benevolence can have in view ; and a benevolence that professes not to value them, and to look only to the quantity of manual labour which the hand

can most expeditiously perform, and the bodily comforts which that more active labour may purchase, even though these objects could be obtained as well without mental light as with it, is a benevolence that is almost as little worthy of the name, as it can ever hope to be worthy of the more useful distinction of beneficent.

These forms of benevolent desire, in their relation to various means of happiness or comfort, lead us naturally to the wish of preserving that tranquillity of mind in others, the violation of which we considered last, in treating, in corresponding order, of the negative duties.

The power which nature has given us over the trains of thought and emotions which we may raise more or less directly in the minds of others, the benevolent man will employ as an instrument of his gracious wishes, not as an instrument of cruelty. It will be his care to awake in the mind of every one who approaches him, the most delightful feelings which he can awake, consistently with the permanent virtue and happiness of him whom he addresses. He will not flatter, therefore, and speak of faults as if they were excellencies ; for this would be to give a little momentary pleasure at the expense of the virtuous happiness of years. But without flattery he will produce more pleasure even for the time, than flattery itself could give. In the interest which he seems to feel, he will show that genuine sincerity which impresses with irresistible belief, and of which the confidence is more gratifying to the virtue, I had almost said to the very vanity of man, than the doubtful praises to which the heart, though it may love to hear them, is incapable of yielding itself.

Benevolence, in this amiable form, of course excludes all haughtiness. The great, however elevated, descend, under its gentle influence, to meet the happiness and the grateful affection of those who are beneath them ; and in descending to happiness and gratitude which themselves have produced, they do not feel that they are descending. What-

ever be the scene of its efforts or wishes, to do good is to the heart always to rise ; and the height of its elevation is therefore always in proportion to the quantity of good which it has effected, or which, at least, it has had the wish of effecting.

Politeness, — which is, when ranks are equal, what affability is, when the more distinguished mingle with the less distinguished — is the natural effect of that benevolence which regards always with sympathetic complacency, and is fearful of disturbing, even by the slightest momentary uneasiness, the serenity of others. A breach of attention in any of the common offices of civility, to which the arbitrary usages of social life have attached importance, even when nothing more is intended, is still a neglect, and neglect is itself an insult ; it is the immediate cause of a pain which no human being is entitled, where there has been no offence, to give to any other human being. Politeness, then, — the social virtue that foresees and provides against every unpleasant feeling that may arise in the breasts around, as if it were some quicksighted and guardian power, intent only on general happiness, — is something far more dignified in its nature than the cold courtesies which pass current under that name, the mere knowledge of fashionable manners, and an exact adherence to them. It is in its most essential respects what may be possessed by those who know little of the varying vocabulary and varying usages of the season. The knowledge of these is, indeed, necessary to such as mingle in the circles which require them ; but they are necessary only as the new fashion of the coat or splendid robe, which leaves him or her who wears it the same human being, in every respect, as before ; and are not more a part of either, than the ticket of admission, which opens to their ready entrance the splendid apartment from which the humble are excluded. The true politeness of the heart is something which cannot be given by those who minister to mere decoration. It is the moral grace of life, if I may

venture so to term it — the grace of the mind ; and what the world counts graces, are little more than graces of the body.

Such is benevolence in the various forms in which it may be instrumental to happiness ; and, in being thus instrumental to the happiness of others, it has truly a source of happiness within itself. It may not feel, indeed, all the enjoyment which it wishes to diffuse, for its wishes are unlimited ; but it feels an enjoyment that is as wide as all the happiness which it sees around it, or the still greater and wider happiness of which it anticipates the existence. The very failure of a benevolent wish only breaks its delight, without destroying it ; for when one wish of good has failed, it has still other wishes of equal or greater good that arise, and occupy and bless it as before.

In considering the various ways in which benevolence may be active, we have seen how extensive it may be as a feeling of the heart. If wealth, indeed, were necessary, there would be few who could enjoy it, or at least who could enjoy it largely. But pecuniary aid, as we have seen, is only one of many forms of being useful. To correct some error, moral or intellectual — to counsel those who are in doubt, and who in such circumstances require instruction, as the indigent require alms — even though nothing more were in our power to show an interest in the welfare of the happy, and a sincere commiseration of those who are in sorrow ; in these, and in innumerable other ways, the benevolent, however scanty may be their means of conferring what alone the world calls benefactions, are not benevolent only, but beneficent ; as truly beneficent, or far more so, as those who squander in loose prodigalities to the deserving and the undeserving, the sufferers from their own thoughtless dissipation, or the sufferers from the injustice or dissipation of others, almost as much as they loosely squander on a few hours of their own sensual appetites.

Even in pecuniary liberalities, benevolence does not merely produce good, but it knows well, or it learns to know, the greatest amount of good which its liberalities can produce. To be the cause of less happiness or comfort than might be diffused at the same cost, is almost a species of the same vice which withholds aid from those who require it. The benevolent, therefore, are magnificent in their bounty, because they are economical even in bounty itself. Their heart is quick to perceive sources of relief where others do not see them ; and the whole result of happiness produced by them, seems often to have arisen from a superb munificence which few could command, when it may, perhaps, have proceeded only from humble means, which the possessor of similar means, without similar benevolence, would think scarcely more than necessary for his own strict necessities. How beautifully, in Pope's well-known description of an individual, whose simple charities have made him as illustrious as the most costly profusion of charity in other circumstances could have done, is this quick tendency to minister to every little comfort marked, in the provision which he is represented as making, not for gross and obvious miseries only, but for the very ease of the traveller or common passenger.

But all our praises why should lords engross !
Rise, honest muse, and sing the Man of Ross !
Pleased Vaga echoes through her winding bounds,
And rapid Severn hoarse applause resounds.
Who hung with woods yon mountain's sultry brow ?
From the dry rock who bade the waters flow ?
Not to the skies in useless columns tost,
Or in proud falls magnificently lost,
But clear and artless, pouring through the plain
Health to the sick and solace to the swain.
Whose causeway parts the vale with shady rows ?
Whose seats the weary traveller repose ?
Who taught that heaven-directed spire to rise ?
The Man of Ross, each lisping babe replies.
Behold the market-place with poor o'erspread !

The Man of Ross divides the weekly bread.
He feeds yon almshouse, neat, but void of state,
Where Age and Want sit smiling at the gate.
Him portion'd maids, apprenticed orphans blest,
The young who labour, and the old who rest.
Is any sick ? the Man of Ross relieves,
Prescribes, attends, the medicine makes and gives.
Is there a variance ? enter but his door,
Balk'd are the courts, and contest is no more.¹

What is it which makes this picture of benevolence so peculiarly pleasing ? It is not the mere quantity of happiness produced, even when taken in connexion with the seemingly disproportionate income, the few hundred pounds a-year which were so nobly devoted to the production of that happiness. It is pleasing, chiefly from the air of beautiful consistency that appears in so wide a variety of good, the evidence of a genuine kindness of heart, that was quick, as I have said, to perceive, not the great evils only which force themselves upon every eye, but the little comforts also which might be ministered to those, of whom the rich, even when they are disposed to extend to them the indolent succour of their alms, and sometimes, too, the more generous succour of their personal aid, are yet accustomed to think only as sufferers who are to be kept alive, rather than as human beings who are to be made happy. We admire, indeed, the active services with which the Man of Ross distributed the weekly bread, built houses that were to be homes of repose for the aged and indigent, visited the sick, and settled amicably the controversies of neighbours and friends, who might otherwise have become foes in becoming litigants ; but it is when, together with these prominent acts of obvious beneficence, we consider the acts of attention to humbler, though less obvious wants, that we feel, with lively delight and confidence, the kindness of a heart which, in its charitable meditations, could think of happiness as well as of misery, and foresee means of

¹ Moral Essays, Epistle iii. 249-272.

happiness, which the benevolent, indeed, can easily produce, but which are visible only to the benevolent. It is by its inattention to the little wants of man, that ostentation distinguishes itself from charity ; and a sagacious observer needs no other test, in the silent disdain or eager reverence of his heart, to separate the seeming benevolence, which seeks the applauding voices of crowds, from the real benevolence, which seeks only to be the spreader of happiness or consolation. It is impossible for the most ostentatious producer of the widest amount of good, with all his largesses, and with all his hypocrisy, to be consistent in his acts of seeming kindness ; because, to be consistent, he must have that real kindness which sees what the cold simulator of benevolence is incapable of seeing, and does, therefore, what such a cold dissembler is incapable even of imagining.

LECTURE XV.

OF THE POSITIVE DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS
ONLY — ARISING FROM AFFINITY, FRIENDSHIP, BENEFITS RECEIVED,
CONTRACT.

In my last Lecture I concluded the remarks which I had to offer on the duties, negative and positive, which we owe to all the individuals of mankind ; on the species of injury from which we are under a moral obligation to abstain, whoever he may be whom it is in our power to injure ; and on the good which we are under a similar obligation to produce to every one who comes within the sphere of our usefulness.

After the consideration of these general duties, then, I proceed to the class of additional duties which we owe to

certain individuals only, with whom we are connected by peculiar ties.

These may be considered by us under five heads ; as the duties which arise from affinity, from friendship, from benefits received, from contract, from citizenship. The duties of this class, as I have said, are additional duties, not duties exclusive of any of the former. We owe to our relations, to our friends, to our benefactors, to those with whom we have entered into engagements of any sort, to our fellow-citizens, all which we owe to others who are connected with us only as human beings ; but we owe them more ; and it is this accession of duty which we have now to consider.

If the only moral offices, of which we had been formed by nature to feel the obligation, were those which connect us alike with every individual of our race, whose happiness we should, in that case, as now, have felt it to be our duty to augment when it was in our power to augment it, and when there was no opportunity of this accession, at least not to lessen its amount, it might perhaps seem to the unreflecting, that a provision as ample would have been made for the happiness of the world, as that which is now so abundantly made for it, under the reciprocal kindness of a system of relative duties that vary in force as the peculiar relation is nearer or more remote, but, in all, add to the general feelings of humanity some new influence of benevolent regard. There have, indeed, even in our own time, been philosophers or moral writers that assume the name, who have contended for this equal diffusion of duty, or at least for a gradation of duty that varies only with the absolute merits of the individual, independently of all particular relationship to the agent,—asserting, in consequence, that every preference to which the private affections lead, is vicious on this very account, as being inconsistent with that exact conformity to the scale of absolute merit, in which alone they conceive virtue to consist. It is right,

indeed, on some occasions, according to this system, to do good to a parent or a benefactor, or rather, it is not absolutely impossible that a case should occur, in which it may not be guilt to do good to a parent or a benefactor; but it is only in rare cases that the choice implied in the singling out of such an object, is proper or allowable, in those rare cases, in which it would have been right to prefer to every other individual of mankind, the same individual, though unconnected with us by any tie but our knowledge of his virtues; and when he, with whom we consider ourselves as peculiarly connected, by the mere accident of our birth, or of kindnesses conferred on us, is not the individual whom, in other circumstances, it would have been, in like manner, our duty thus to prefer, it does not become more our duty, on account of these accidental circumstances. Far from being virtuous, therefore, in bestowing on him any limited good which it is in our power to bestow only on one, we are guilty, with no slight degree of delinquency, in the very action which we may strive to cover with the seemingly honourable name of gratitude or filial duty. These names, indeed, are honourable only in sound or semblance; for, to those who are capable of appreciating them ethically, they are as void of moral meaning, as the words tall or short, fat or thin; which, in like manner, express qualities of human beings, whom it may be right to prefer, or wrong to prefer, but not the more right, nor the more wrong, to prefer them on account of any of these physical qualities to those who may be of greater merit, though fatter or thinner, taller or shorter.

The errors of this system of sole universal duty I have already endeavoured to point out to you, when I explained the importance to happiness, of all the private affections;—the great accession to the general good which is every moment flowing from the indulgence of a regard that, in thinking with a more lively interest of the individual loved than it would be possible to think of a community, is then,

perhaps, the most effective contributor to the happiness of mankind, when the happiness of mankind is most forgotten by it, in the happiness of one or of a few of the number. The human race, as distinguishable from families and individuals, is but a mere abstraction, and expresses truly nothing more than the very individuals who are thus at every moment gratifying and gratified. What produces the greatest amount of good to all, in the enjoyment of the private affections, is not that which we can readily suppose the framer of a world that is blessed by this very production, to have formed every individual to regard as vice; and to regard as virtue only the disregard of that with which the world would be more happy. We find, accordingly, the universal feelings of mankind accordant with the system of particular duties, that is so largely productive of happiness. In every region of the earth, and in all circumstances of society, the indulgence of the private affections is considered not as allowable merely, but as obligatory, so obligatory on all, that the guilt which would produce every where the most general abhorrence, would be, not the forgetfulness of the good of the world, — for of this the thousands that live around us, in the continued exercise of many virtues, seldom if ever think, — but the violation of some one of these private duties, the injury done to a friend, a benefactor, a parent, or even without positive injury, the mere neglect of them, in circumstances of want or of suffering of any kind, which our bounty, or exertions of active aid, could relieve.

We are to prefer to the happiness of our parent or benefactor, it is said, the happiness of a stranger, who, without any particular relation to us, is a degree or two higher in the scale of absolute merit. But why are we to seek his happiness, and why is it immoral to disregard it? In this system, as in every other system of vice and virtue, there must be some source of the distinctive feelings. It is to our moral emotions, as they rise on the contemplation of

certain actions, that the theorist must look ; or, if he disregard these, he must allow that vice and virtue are words without a meaning ; and if virtue and vice have their sole origin in these moral emotions, is there an observer of our nature who can have the boldness to maintain, that, in relation to these feelings, in which all that is morally obligatory is to be found, gratitude to a benefactor is a vice, and the disregard of the sufferings of a parent a virtue, whenever, without the power of relieving both, we see before us, at the same time, a suffering stranger, who is capable of doing a little more good to the world ?

The very feeling of duty, then, has its source, and its only source, in the very moral emotions by which the private affections are particularly recommended to us. To exclude, therefore, from a system of duty, the exercise of the private affections in those preferences which are only the private affections becoming active, and, in excluding these, to maintain at the same time that there is a system of duty, a virtue in certain preferences, a vice in certain other preferences, is to be guilty of inconsistency, far more illogical than the licentiousness which denies all virtue and vice whatever. To prove that there is some truth in moral obligation, this universalist, as we have seen, must necessarily appeal to those moral feelings of which we are conscious, without which it would be vain for him to speak of moral distinction of any sort. For his sole proof, then, of the virtue of disregarding wholly every personal relationship and affection, he appeals to feelings that, if they establish any obligation whatever, establish none so firmly as that of the private relative duties, which they are every moment sanctioning and approving ; and his system, therefore, if we trace its principles to their source, in the approving and disapproving principle within us, is precisely the same in import, as if its radical doctrine were, that it is right for us to do certain actions, because it is wrong for us

to do them, or wrong for us to do certain other actions, because to do them would be right.

It is surely, I repeat, by a very strange paralogism, that he would found an assertion of an exclusive universal duty on the moral feelings of our heart, which alone enable us to distinguish what is virtuous from what is vicious, and would yet contend that these very feelings of our heart, which are rising at every moment in the very conception of our parents, our friends, our country, are at every moment to be disregarded. But, even though this radical objection were omitted, and though we were to concede to the universalist, that the private affections are not recommended to us, by nature, on their own account; that to our moral feelings, the equal sufferings of our benefactor, and of a stranger of equal general merit, are exactly of the same interest; and that all which is truly an object of interest to us, is the amount of public happiness of the great community of mankind; still, if we regard the general happiness, are not the means of the greatest amount of general happiness to be valued at least as means? And if the indulgence of the private affections tend, upon the whole, to a greater amount of good, is not our calculating virtue, which should prefer always what is to contribute most largely to the great sum of happiness, to rank as virtuous what is so extensively beneficial?

In treating of our emotions of love, as they vary in relation to their different objects, I endeavoured to exhibit to you that beautiful arrangement, with which, in all these varieties, Heaven has adapted the vividness of our affections to our power of being beneficial; the love being most lively in those moral connexions, in which the opportunities of usefulness are most frequent, and capable of being most accurately applied, in relation to the peculiar wants of him who is to be benefited. The scale of duty, which corresponds with this scale of affection, and of probable usefulness, the ethical destroyers of private affection of course exclude.

We are not to think more of those whom it is in our power, almost at every instant, to make happier than they were, than of those who are at the remotest distance from our sphere of usefulness. We are to view them according to their individual merits, as human beings only; the parent as the stranger, the stranger as the parent; and, when we strive thus to view them with equal affection, it is not difficult to discover which metamorphosis of feeling will be the more probable, in this one equalized emotion. It will be impossible for us to look on a stranger with the emotions of vivid regard, of which we are conscious, as often as we think of those from whom we derived existence, and whatever has made existence a gift of value. It is far from impossible, however, that, by frequently considering these earliest benefactors, as possessing no higher moral claim to our regard and good offices, than those who stand in the same relationship to any other person, we may learn, at least, to make an approximation to this indifference; and to regard a parent with the affection which we now feel for a stranger, more nearly than we regard a stranger with the affection which we now feel for a parent.

In the wide communion of the social world, each individual is, as it were, the centre of many circles. Near him, are those from whom he has derived most happiness, and to whom, reciprocally, it is in his power to diffuse most happiness, in continual interchange of kindness. In the circle beyond, are they who have had less opportunity of such mutual benefits than those who are nearer, but more than the widening number in the circles that progressively enlarge, as the distance from the centre increases, and enlarge in expansion and distance, with a corresponding inverse diminution of benefits conferred, and of the capacity of being benefited. It would have been a system of very different adaptation for the production of happiness, if the scale of regard had been reversed; so that our benevolent wishes had been more and more vivid, in opposite

progression, for those whom it was less and less in our power to serve. In such a case it is very evident, that the general amount of happiness would have been reduced in two ways, by the omission of many opportunities of doing good to those immediately around us, of which, with livelier affection, we should not have failed to avail ourselves; and still more by the painful wish of relief to sufferers at a distance, to whose miseries this very distance deprived us of all power of contributing even the slightest means of alleviation. The evil of such a reversal of the present scale of affection and duty, is scarcely more than the evil that would arise to the world, from the equalization of regard in the system of universal duty, that excludes from its moral estimate every private affection. I do not speak at present of the impossibility of such a system, as inconsistent with some of the strongest principles of our nature. I proceed on the supposition of its possibility, and consider its influence on the happiness of the world, in comparison with the system on which we at present act. If we are to regard mankind only according to their individual excellence, as members of one great society, and to sacrifice, therefore, all private feelings to one great public feeling that has this society of mankind for its object, the equal diffusion of our love to all, whose absolute merit is precisely the same, must, if produced at all, be produced in one of two ways; either by increasing, in a very high degree, the liveliness of our regard for those who are strangers to us, at a distance, or by lessening, in an equal degree, the liveliness of our regard for those who surround us in our immediate neighbourhood, and under the very shelter of our domestic roof. If the equality be produced by levelling these kinder feelings, so that, when an opportunity of doing good occurs to us, we think not of those who are beside us, and who may be speedily profited by it, but of some one at a greater distance, whom our action, if deferred, may never profit; if, with a constant moral fear of erring in the allot-

ment of our expressions of benevolence, we look coldly on every one, on whom our eye is every moment falling in the domestic intercourse of the day, and reserve our courtesies, our smiles, our very tones of kindness, for some one of greater absolute merit, whom we expect to see before the day is closed, or whom we have at least a chance of seeing before we quit the world, it is evident that far more than half of the happiness of every day would be destroyed to every bosom, by this calculating appreciation of kindness. It is not a mere faint desire of good to any one, that is quick to find the good which it desires. It is the lively benevolence that sees, in almost every thing, some relation to the happiness of the object loved ; because the happiness of the object loved is constantly in the mind of him who feels that liveliness of benevolence. Opportunities of producing good, therefore, are never wanting to him who is strongly desirous of producing it ; and to lessen the liveliness of our kind wishes for those who are around us, would, therefore, be to render ineffective a thousand occasions of enjoyment or relief.

Such would be the evil of reducing the force of the peculiar interest which we feel, in the happiness of our relations, of our friends, of all who are connected with us by any of the closer bonds of social union. But the evil that could not fail to arise in this way, would be slight, compared with that which would arise, in the other circumstances supposed, if our affection for the most distant stranger were raised, so as to correspond in intensity with the liveliness of our feeling for those immediately around us. If it be our duty to wish in as lively a manner the happiness of the natives of some African tribe as of our friend or our father, we must either feel very little interest in the happiness of our friend or our father, or we must have a strong wish of benefiting that tribe of Africans, which, as such a wish must be wholly ineffectual on the part of the greater number of mankind, cannot fail to be a source of continued

uneasiness. This would be the case, even though we were to think only of accessions to happiness, without taking into account the absolute misery of those in whose evils of every sort we are to sympathize, with all the quickness of commiseration, which transfers instantly to our own bosom a share of every evil that is suffered by those whom we love. Let us imagine a single individual, who, in accordance with such a system, feels for every wretchedness of every victim of disease, or captivity, or want, in every nation of the globe, a thousandth part of the agony which he would feel, if that victim were his parent, or his dearest friend; and let us then think, what the state of man would be, if all the sympathies of his nature had been thus arranged, in adaptation to a system of duties that excluded every local and accidental influence, and estimated human beings only as human beings. It would, indeed, be no slight evil, if we could learn to look with total disregard on the sorrows of others. But while there was misery in the world, if the misery of all individuals of all nations were to be equally felt by us, or not felt by us at all, an universal indifference would probably be less destructive to general happiness, than the anguish of sharing so many miseries at the distance perhaps of half the earth, which it would be almost as vain for us to think of relieving, as of relieving the sufferings of the inhabitants of another planet. In proportioning our duties with our affections, to our facilities of affording aid to the miserable, and of affording happiness to the few whom it is most easy to render happy, nature has consulted best for general happiness; all are every where most active in administering relief or enjoyment, where activity may be most useful; and the beautiful result of the moral excellence of a state is thus produced in the same way as the political wealth and power of a state are produced, by innumerable little efforts, that individually increase the general amount, which is, at the time, no object of conception, but which, as it rises at last

from the efforts of all, attracts the admiration of those who unconsciously contributed to it, and who, in admiring it when it has risen, are scarcely aware that the efforts which raised it were their own. To hope to produce greater virtue and happiness, by the exclusion of every particular duty, is in truth a speculation as wild, as it would be to hope to augment the political resources of an empire, by urging individuals to regard not their own profit in any case, but the profit of their thousand competitors, in the equal market of industry.

It is not evil, then, for man upon the whole, that, in wishing the happiness of all mankind, he should wish, in an especial manner, the happiness of those who are connected with him by peculiar ties,—by those ties of additional duty which I have already enumerated. To the first of these I now proceed.

Of the ties of relationship, and the duties of which that relationship is the source, we may consider, in the first place, those under which man enters into life,—the ties which bind together with reciprocal duties the parent and the child.

If we consider merely the powers of the individual, in relation to the evils to which he is exposed, man is born the most helpless of all created things. But if we consider the affection that exists in the bosoms to which he is for the first time pressed; the moral principle which, in those bosoms, would render the neglect of his wants one of the most atrocious of crimes; and the eager tendency to anticipate, with the necessary relief, the slightest expression of these wants,—a tendency which is instant of itself, and which requires no moral principle to call it into action,—man, we may truly say, is born as powerful as he is to be in years, when his own wisdom and the vigour of his own arm are to be to him what he may count a surer protection. He may afterwards speak with a voice of command to those whose services he has purchased, and who obey him,

because, in the barter which they have made of their services, it is their trade to obey ; but he cannot, even then, by the most imperious orders which he addresses to the most obsequious slaves, exercise an authority more commanding than that which, in the first hours of his life, when a few indistinct cries and tears were his only language, he exercised irresistibly over hearts, of the very existence of which he was ignorant.

This feeling of regard is so strong in every breast, and so simple in its relation to the mere sustenance and protection of the little object of so many cares, that it would be a waste of time to treat of the primary obligation under which the parents lie, to save from perishing that human creature to which they have given existence, and which could not fail to perish, but for the aid which it is in their power to give to it. It is only with respect to the more complicated duties of the relation, in maturer years, that any difficulty can be felt.

These duties relate to the education of the child, to the provision which is made for his mere worldly accommodation, and to the expression of that internal love which should accompany all these cares, and without which it would be impossible to feel them as acts of kindness.

That such an education is to be given in every case, as is suitable to the pecuniary circumstances of the parents, and to the rank which the child may be expected afterwards to fill, there is probably no one who would deny, however much individuals may differ as to the meaning of the term education. In the lowest ranks of life, at least in far the greater part even of civilized Europe, it means nothing more than the training of the hands to a certain species of motion, which forms one of the subdivisions of mechanical industry. In the higher ranks, it implies, in like manner, a certain training of the limbs to series of motions, which are however not motions of mere utility, like those of the artisan, but of grace ; and, in addition to

those bodily movements, a training of the mind to a due command of certain graceful forms of expression, to which, in a few happier cases, is added the knowledge, more or less extensive and accurate, of the most striking truths of science. When all this is performed, education is thought to be complete. To express this completion by the strongest possible word, the individual is said to be accomplished ; and if graceful motions of the limbs, and motions of the tongue, in well-turned phrases of courteous elegance, and a knowledge of some of the brilliant expressions of poets, and wits, and orators, of different countries, and of a certain number of the qualities of the masses or atoms which surround him, were sufficient to render man what God intended him to be, the parent who had taken every necessary care for adorning his child with these bodily and mental graces, might truly exult in the consciousness that he had done his part to the generation which was to succeed, by accomplishing at least one individual for the noble duties which he had to perform in it. But, if the duties which man has to perform, whatever ornament they may receive from the corporeal and intellectual graces that may flow around them, imply the operation of principles of action of a very different kind ; if it is in the heart that we are to seek the source of the feelings which are our noblest distinction,—with which we are what even God may almost approve, and without which we are worthy of the condemnation even of beings frail and guilty as ourselves ; and if the heart require to be protected from vice, with far more care than the understanding itself, fallible as it is, to be protected from error, can he indeed lay claim to the praise of having discharged the parental office of education, who has left the heart to its own passions, while he has contented himself with furnishing to those passions the means of being more extensively baneful to the world than, with less accomplished selfishness, they could have been ?

How many parents do we see, who, after teaching their sons by example every thing which is licentious in manners, and lavishing on them the means of similar licentiousness, are rigid only in one point — in the strictness of that intellectual discipline which may prepare them for the worldly stations to which the parental ambition has been unceasingly looking for them, before the filial ambition was rendered sufficiently intent of itself! — how many, who allow to the vices of the day full liberty, if the lesson of the day be duly meditated; and who are content that those whose education they direct should be knaves and sensualists, if only they be fitted by intellectual culture to be the leaders of other knaves, and the acquirers of wealth that may render their sensuality more delicately luxurious! To such persons, the mind of the little creature whom they are training to worldly stations for worldly purposes, is an object of interest only as that without which it would be impossible to arrive at the dignities expected. It is a necessary instrument for becoming rich and powerful; and if he could become powerful, and rich, and envied, without a soul, — exhibit the same spectacle of magnificent luxury, and be capable of adding to the means of present pomp, what might furnish out a luxury still more magnificent, they would scarcely feel that he was a being less noble than now. In what they term education, they have never once thought that the virtues were to be included as objects; and they would truly feel something very like astonishment if they were told that the first and most essential part of the process of educating the moral being whom Heaven had consigned to their charge, was yet to be begun, in the abandonment of their own vices, and the purification of their own heart by better feelings than those which had corrupted it; without which primary self-amendment, the very authority that is implied in the noble office which they were to exercise, might be a source not of good but of evil to him who was unfortunately born to be its subject.

Corrumpunt vitiorum exempla domestica, magnis
Cum subeunt animos auctoribus. Unus et alter
Forsitan haec spernant juvenes, quibus arte benigna,
Et meliore luto, finxit praecordia Titan :
Sed reliquos fugienda patrum vestigia ducunt,
Et monstrata diu veteris trahit orbita culpae.
Abstineas igitur damnandis; hujus enim vel
Una potens ratio est, ne crimina nostra sequantur
Ex nobis geniti; quoniam dociles imitandis
Turpidis ac pravis omnes sumus, et Catilinam
Quocunque in populo videas, quocunque sub axe;
Sed nec Brutus erit, Bruti nec avunculus usquam.
Maxima debetur puero reverentia : si quid
Turpe paras, ne tu pueri contempseris annos,
Sed peccaturo obstet tibi filius infans.¹

Though the enjoyments of this world, which so many seek as all, were truly all, and we ceased to exist when our mortal existence terminated, it would still be the duty of the parent to consult the happiness of the child, more than those circumstances of accidental happiness which may sometimes lead to it, but often, perhaps as often, are productive of misery; and, even of the short happiness of this short life, how large is the part which we have to ascribe to our virtuous affections, or rather, how very little is there of pure happiness which we can ascribe to any other source. But when we think how small a portion of our immortal existence is comprised in this earthly life; when, amid sensual pleasures that fade almost in the moment in which they are enjoyed, and wealth and dignities that are known more in their rapid changes, as passing from possessor to possessor, than as truly possessed by any one of the multitude, who, in their turns, obtain and lose them, we feel that, amid so many perishable and perishing things, virtue, the source of all which it is delightful to remember, is the only permanent acquisition which can be made,—how completely must he seem to have neglected

¹ Juvenal, Sat. xiv. 32-49.

the duty of a parent, who has thought only of a few years that are as nothing, and neglected that immortality which is all. If we had a long voyage to undertake, it would be but a cruel kindness that should pour forth its bounty on a single day, and provide for us only one repast, however costly. It is surely a kindness not less cruel which, in the common offices of education, thinks but of a single day, and makes provision only for its comfort in that endless course, not of years, but of ages, on which we enter in entering into life.

In giving to society another individual, we owe to it every care, on our part, that the individual, thus given to it, may not be one whose existence may be counted by society among the evils that have oppressed it.

Gratum est, quod patriae civem, populoque dedisti,
Si facis, ut patriae sit idoneus.¹

Nor is it only to the country to which we give a new citizen, that our gift is to be estimated, as a blessing or an injury, according to the nature of the living offering that is presented to it. To that very citizen himself the gift of existence is the greatest of all blessings, or the greatest of all injuries, only as his character is to be virtuous or vicious; and whether the character is to be virtuous or vicious, may often depend on circumstances which were almost at the disposal of him by whom the doubtful gift of mere existence was bestowed. "It is not a blessing," says an ancient philosopher, "to live merely, but to live well. Life in itself, if life without wisdom be a good, is a good that is common to me with the meanest reptiles; and he who gave me nothing more than life, gave me only what a fly or a worm may boast. If, in the love and hope of virtue, I have employed that life which my parents conferred on me, in studies that were to render me more

¹ Juvenal, Sat. xiv. 70.

noble in the sight of Heaven, I have paid back to them more than I have received. My father gave me to myself rude and ignorant ; I have given him a son, of whom it may delight him to be the father." "Non est bonum vivere, sed bene vivere. Si vitam imputas mihi, per se, nudam, egentem consilii, et id ut magnum bonum jactas, cogita te mihi imputare muscarum ac vermium bonum. Deinde, ut nihil aliud dicam, quam bonis artibus me studuisse, ut cursum ad rectum iter vitæ dirigerim ; in ipso beneficio tuo majus quam quod dederas, recepisti. Tu enim me mihi rudem et imperitum dedisti : ego tibi filium, qualem genuisse gauderes." ¹

The neglect of parental duty, in the comparative inattention to the moral discipline of the mind, may indeed be considered only as a continuation to the offspring of the errors which influence the parent in conduct that relates wholly to himself. He seeks for them what he seeks for himself ; and as he is ambitious to be rich or powerful, rather than happy, he wishes to enable them, in like manner, to be rich or powerful, and leaves their happiness, as he has left his own, to be the casual result of circumstances that may or may not produce it.

The importance attached by parents to the mere temporary circumstances of earthly splendour, which leads to one most fatal species of violation of parental duty in the sort of culture which they are most anxious to bestow, aggravates, in a very high degree, the second species of violation of it to which I alluded in enumerating the parental duties, that which consists in inadequate provision of those very means to which they attach so much importance. I do not speak at present of the extreme prodigality of those who think only of themselves, and who scarcely think even of themselves beyond an hour ; the prodigality which leaves in indigence those who have been brought up in habits of

¹ Seneca de Beneficiis, lib. iii. cap. xxxi.

luxury, that have rendered luxury, like that of their extravagant parents, almost an object of necessity to them. I allude to the intentional deliberate sacrifice which is made of the comforts of many children to the wealth of one,—a sacrifice which has usually, or at least often, tended only to make one less virtuous than he would have been, and many less happy. The national consequences of the privileges of primogeniture and of sex, belong to inquiries in political jurisprudence. At present, it is not of these that I speak. It is only of the wants of the children, and the affection and duty of the parent. These wants are obviously equal in all ; and if the merits of all be equal, the affection of the parent should be the same, and his duty equal to all who, with equal wants and equal merits, are consigned to his equal love. It is vain now to look for a justification of breaches of this equal duty, to periods of violence, in which it was necessary, for the happiness of all, that inequality of distribution should take place, that there might be one sufficiently powerful to protect the scantier pittance of the many. These circumstances of violence are now no more subsisting in the regular politics of Europe. The affections are allowed without peril to exercise themselves freely. The father of many virtuous children may safely be to all what he is to one ; and if he lay aside this equal character, and, sheltering himself in the forced manners of barbarous and tumultuous ages, make many poor that he may make one rich, is guilty of a gross violation of his duties as a parent ; and the more guilty, in exact proportion to the value which he attaches to the possession of the wealth so unequally distributed. Nor is it only to those whom he directly wills to impoverish, that he is guilty of a breach of duty ; he is equally guilty of it, in many cases, to the single individual whom he exclusively enriches, if, in estimating what he confers, we consider the virtue and happiness, or vice and misery, that may arise from it, and not the mere

wealth, which in itself is nothing. The superiority which is thus bestowed on a single individual, is a superiority that may, indeed, like every possession of power, lead to the exercise of corresponding virtues; to the generous mind it may present, as it has often presented, only wider occasions of generosity; yet beautiful as such examples may be, it is not what the general circumstances of our nature authorize us to expect; and the power of being thus generous, when, without that dubious generosity, those who have been made dependent on it may suffer what perhaps it was not intended that they should suffer, is a power of too great peril to human virtue to be rashly imposed upon human weakness.

Such are two of the great duties of parents; those which relate to provision for the mental culture, and temporal accommodation of their offspring. I have mentioned, as a third duty, that of tempering the parental authority with all the kindness of parental love, which, even in exacting obedience only where obedience is necessary for the good of him who obeys, is still the exacter of sacrifices which require to be sweetened by the kindness that demands them. This duty, indeed, may be considered as in some degree involved in the general duty of moral education; since it is not a slight part of that duty to train the mind of the child to those affections which suit the filial nature, and which are the chief element of every other affection that adorns in after life the friend, the citizen, the lover of mankind. The father who has no voice but that of stern command, is a tyrant to all the extent of his power, and will excite only such feelings as tyrants excite; a ready obedience, perhaps, but an obedience that is the trembling haste of a slave, not the still quicker fondness of an ever ready love; and that will be withheld in the very instant in which the terror has lost its dominion. It is impossible to have, in a single individual, both a slave and a son; and he who chooses rather to have a slave, must not expect that

filial fondness which is no part of the moral nature of a bondman. In thinking that he increases his authority, he truly diminishes it; for more than half the authority of the parent is in the love which he excites, in that zeal to obey which is scarcely felt as obedience when a wish is expressed, and in that ready imitation of the virtues that are loved, which does not require even the expression of a wish, but without a command becomes all which a virtuous parent could have commanded.

LECTURE XVI.

OF THE DUTIES OF AFFINITY—PARENTAL DUTIES; FILIAL DUTIES;
FRATERNAL DUTIES; CONJUGAL DUTIES.

IN my last Lecture I arranged the duties which we owe to particular individuals, under five heads: as arising from affinity; from friendship; from benefits received; from contract; from the general patriotism which connects together all the citizens that live on the same soil, or under the protection of the same system of polity.

In considering the duties of affinity, we entered on our inquiry with those which belong to the first relationship of life,—the relationship that connects together, with a tie as delightful as it is indissoluble, the parent and the child. We begin to exist under the protection of the duties of others,—the objects of a moral regard, of which we are soon ourselves to share the reciprocal influence; and, from the moment at which we are capable of understanding that there are beings around us who have benefited us, or to whom it is in our power to give a single enjoyment, our duties too commence, and life itself may be said to be a series of duties fulfilled or violated.

We are the objects of duty, however, before we are capable of feeling its force, or of knowing that we have ourselves duties to fulfil; and the nature of this primary obligation of the parent, of which we are the objects as soon as we have begun to breathe, and which death only can dissolve, was considered fully in my last Lecture. The preservation of the mere animal existence of the child is an office of parental obligation too obvious, however, and too simple to require elucidation. Our attention, therefore, was given to the other duties which the parental relation involves:—in the first place, the duty of giving to him, whose wisdom or ignorance, virtue or vice, happiness or misery, may depend in a great measure on the nature of the instruction and example which he may receive, such education as, while it trains him for all the honour and usefulness which his rank in life may seem to promise to the reasonable expectation of the parent, may not forget that this life is but the commencement of immortality, and the thoughts and feelings, therefore, which it is most important to cultivate, not those which have relation only to worldly wealth and dignity, but those to which the proudest honours of earthly life are but the accidents of a day. In the second place, even with respect to the short period of earthly existence, which, short as it is when compared with immortality, still admits of many enjoyments, which we may supply, or withhold, or lessen, and of many evils which we might have prevented; the duty of affording to the child such a provision of the means of worldly comfort and usefulness, as is suitable to the circumstances of the parent, and of affording this provision to the different members of a family, not in the manner which may seem best fitted to gratify the personal vanity of the provider, but in the manner that is best fitted to contribute to the happiness of all who, with a relationship that is precisely the same, if their merits and wants be equal, have a moral claim to equal regard, in the distribution that is to provide for those wants.

In the third place, the duty of exercising with kindness the parental power ; of imposing no restraint which has not for its object some good, greater than the temporary evil of the restraint itself, of making the necessary obedience of the child in this way not so much a duty as a delight ; and of thus preparing him to be, in other years, the grateful and tender friend of a parent whose authority, even in its most rigid exactions, he has felt only as the watchful tenderness of friendship, that was rigid in withholding only what it would have been dangerous to grant.

Having considered, then, the duties of the parent, in all their relations to the being to whom he has given existence, let us now proceed to consider the reciprocal duties of the child. These arise from two sources,—from the power of the parent, and from his past kindness. As morally responsible, to a certain degree, for the happiness of the child, it is evident that he must have over it an authority of some sort, without which there could be no power of guarding it from the greatest of all dangers, the dangers of its own ignorance and obstinacy. It is equally evident, that, as the author of all the benefits which a parent can confer, he has a just claim to more than mere authority. From the salutary and indispensable power of the parent flows the duty of filial obedience : from the benevolence of the parent the duty of filial love, and of all the services to which that love can lead. Obedience, then, is the first filial duty,—a duty which varies in the extent of obligation at different periods of life, but which does not cease wholly at any period. The child must obey with a subjection that is complete, because he is incapable of judging what would be most expedient for him, without the direction of another ; and no other individual can be supposed so much interested, in directing to what is expedient for him, as the parent, who must reap an accession of happiness from his happiness, or suffer in his sufferings. The man should obey in every thing, indeed, in which the obedience will not involve the

sacrifice of a duty, but only some loss of comfort on his part; yet he is not, like the child, to obey blindly: for the reason which required the blindness of obedience does not exist in his case. He is capable of weighing accurately duty with duty, because he is capable of seeing consequences which the child cannot see. He is not to obey, where he could obey only by a crime; nor, even where the evil to be suffered would be only a loss of happiness to himself, can he be morally bound to make himself miserable for the gratification of a desire that, even in a parent, may be a desire of caprice or folly. Where the duty of obedience, in such cases, should be considered as terminating, it would not be easy to define by words; since the limit varies, not merely with the amount of the sacrifice required, but with the extent of former parental favour, that may have required a greater or less return of grateful compliance from the tenderness of filial obligation. I need not add, that, in any case of doubtful duty, a virtuous son will always be inclined to widen in some degree, rather than to narrow, the sphere of his obedience.

As the duty of obedience flows from the necessary power of the parent, in relation to the ignorance and weakness of those who are new to life, and therefore need his guidance, the filial duties of another class flow from the benefits conferred by the parent, benefits greater than can be conferred by any other; since to them is due the very capacity of profiting by the benefits of others. Of how many cares must every human being have been the subject, before he could acquire even the thoughtless vigour of boyhood! and how many cares additional were necessary, then, to render that thoughtless vigour something more than the mere power of doing injury to itself! They whose constant attention was thus necessary to preserve our very being, to whom we owe the instruction which we have received, and, in a great measure too, our very virtues, may have sometimes, perhaps, exercised a rigour that was unnecessary, or

abstained from affording us comforts which we might have enjoyed without any loss of virtue. But still the amount of advantage is not to be forgotten on account of some slight evil. We owe them much, though we might have owed them more; and, owing them much, we cannot morally abstain from paying them the duties of those who owe much. They should have no wants while we have even the humblest superfluity; or rather, while want is opposed to want, ours is not that of which we should be the first to think. In their bodily infirmities, we are the attendants who should be most assiduous round their couch or their chair; and even those mental infirmities of age which are more disgusting, the occasional peevishness which reproaches for failures of duty that were not intended, the caprice that exacts one day what it would not permit the day before, and what it is again to refuse on the succeeding day, we are to bear, not as if it were an effort to bear them, and a sacrifice to duty, but with that tenderness of affection which bears much because it loves much, and does not feel the sacrifices which it occasionally makes, because it feels only the love which delights in making them.

Lovely as virtue is in all its forms, there is no form in which it is more lovely than in this tender ministry of offices of kindness, where the kindness, perhaps, is scarcely felt, or considered less as kindness than as the duty which might have been fairly demanded, and which there is no merit, therefore, in having paid. Though we have often the gratification of seeing, in the progress of life, many beautiful examples of age that is not more venerable for its past virtues, than amiable with a lasting and still increasing gentleness, which softens the veneration, indeed, but augments it even while it softens it, it is not always that the last years of life present to us this delightful aspect; and when the temper is, in these last years, unfortunately clouded, — when there is no smile of kindness in the faded

eye, that grows bright again for moments, only when there is fretfulness in the heart, — when the voice that is feeble, only in the utterance of grateful regard, is still sometimes loud, with tones of a very different expression, — the kindness which, in its unremitting attention, never shows by a word or look the sadness that is felt on these undeserved reproaches, and that regards them only as proofs of a weakness that requires still more to be comforted, is a kindness which virtue alone can inspire and animate, but which, in the bosom that is capable of it, virtue must already have well rewarded. How delightful is the spectacle, when, amid all the temptations of youth and beauty, we witness some gentle heart, that gives to the couch of the feeble, and, perhaps, of the thankless and repining, those hours which others find too short for the successive gaieties with which an evening can be filled, and that prefers to the smile of universal admiration the single smile of enjoyment, which, after many vain efforts, has at last been kindled on one solitary cheek?

If filial love be thus ready to bear with bodily and moral infirmities, it is not less ready to bear with intellectual weakness. There is often, especially in the middle classes of life, as great a difference of mental culture in the parent and the child as if they had lived at the distance of many centuries. The wealth that has been acquired by patient industry, or some fortunate adventure, may be employed in diffusing all the refinement of science and literature to the children of those, to whom the very words, science and literature, are words of which they would scarcely be able, even with the help of a dictionary, to understand the meaning. In a rank of life still lower, there are not wanting many meritorious individuals, who, uninstructed themselves, labour indefatigably to obtain the means of liberal instruction for one whose wisdom, in after years, when he is to astonish the village, may gratify at once their ambition and their love. It would, indeed, be painful to think, that any

one, whose superiority of knowledge has cost his parents so much fatigue, and so many privations of comforts, which, but for the expense of the means of his acquired superiority, they might have enjoyed, should turn against them, in his own mind, the acquirements which were to them of so costly a purchase, despising them for the very ignorance which gave greater merit to their sacrifice, and proud of a wisdom far less noble, when it can thus feel contempt, than the humble ignorance which it despises.

He who, in the fulfilment of every filial duty, has obeyed as a son should obey, and loved as a son should love, may not, indeed, with all his obedience and affection, have been able to return an amount of benefit equal to that which he has received ; but, in being thus virtuous, he has at least made the return that is most grateful to a virtuous parent's heart. He has not been unsuccessful in that contest of mutual love, in which, as Seneca truly says, it is happy to conquer, and happy to be overcome. "*Alia ex aliis exempla subeunt,*" — he remarks, after citing many instances of filial duty, — "*eorum qui parentes suos periculis eripuerunt, qui ex infimo ad summum protulerunt, et e plebe acervoque ignobili nunquam tacendos saeculis dederunt. Nulla vi verborum, nulla ingenii facultate exprimi potest, quantum opus sit, quam laudabile, quamque nunquam a memoria hominum exiturum, posse hoc dicere, Parentibus meis parui, cessi : imperio eorum, sive aequum, sive iniquum ac durum fuit, obsequentem submissumque me prae bui : ad hoc unum contumax fui, ne beneficiis vincerer. Felices qui vicerint : felices qui vincentur. Quid eo adolescente praeclarius, qui sibi ipsi dicere poterit (neque enim fas est alteri dicere) Patrem meum beneficiis vici ! Quid eo fortunatius sene, qui omnibus ubique praedicabit, a filio suo se beneficiis victum !*"¹

Such is that beautiful arrangement of Heaven, to which

¹ De Beneficiis, lib. iii. cap. xxxviii.

I have already so often alluded, that, in adapting the weakness of one generation to the strength of the generation which preceded it, and to the love which finds an object of increasing regard in the very wants which are every moment relieved or prevented, has made that which might seem to common eyes a provision only for the continued existence of the race of man, a source of more than half the virtues of mankind. It is thus truly, as Pope says, that he

Who framed a whole, the whole to bless,
On mutual wants built mutual happiness.
So, from the first, eternal order ran,
And creature link'd to creature, man to man.
Whate'er of life all-quickeneth ether keeps,
Or breathes through air, or shoots beneath the deeps,
Or pours profuse on earth, one nature feeds
The vital flame, and swells the genial seeds.
Thus beast and bird their common charge attend,
The mothers nurse it, and the sires defend ;
The young dismiss'd to wander earth or air,
There stops the instinct, and there ends the care,
The link dissolves, each seeks a fresh embrace,
Another love succeeds, another race.
A longer care Man's helpless kind demands ;
That longer care contracts more lasting bands.
Still as one brood, and as another rose,
These natural love maintain'd, habitual those.
Reflection, reason, still the ties improve,
At once extend the interest and the love ;
And still new needs, new helps, new habits rise,
That graft benevolence on charities.¹

Next in order to the relationship of the parent and child, may be considered the relation which the child bears to those who are united with him by the same tie, to the same parental bosoms. If friendship be delightful, if it be

¹ Essay on Man, Ep. iii. 111, &c.

above all delightful to enjoy the continued friendship of those who are endeared to us by the intimacy of many years, who can discourse with us of the frolics of the school, of the adventures and studies of the college, of the years when we first ranked ourselves with men in the free society of the world, how delightful must be the friendship of those who, accompanying us through all this long period, with a closer union than any casual friend, can go still farther back, from the school to the very nursery which witnessed our common pastimes, who have had an interest in every event that has related to us, and in every person that has excited our love or our hatred, who have honoured with us those to whom we have paid every filial honour in life, and wept with us over those whose death has been to us the most lasting sorrow of our heart. Such, in its wide unbroken sympathy, is the friendship of brothers, considered even as friendship only; and how many circumstances of additional interest does this union receive from the common relationship to those who have original claims to our still higher regard, and to whom we offer an acceptable service, in extending our affection to those whom they love. In treating of the circumstances that tend peculiarly to strengthen this tie, Cicero extends his view even to the common sepulchre that is at last to enclose us: "*Sanguinis conjunctio devincit caritate homines. Magnum est enim, eadem habere monumenta majorum, iisdem uti sacris, sepulchra habere communia.*" It is, indeed, a powerful image, a symbol, and almost a lesson of unanimity. Every dissension of man with man excites in us a feeling of painful incongruity. But we feel a peculiar incongruity in the discord of those whom one roof has continued to shelter during life, and whose dust is afterwards to be mingled under a single stone.

On the fraternal duties, however, I need not dwell, because they may be considered very nearly in the same light as the duties of that friendship to which I have already

compared them, the duties of a cordial intimacy rendered more sacred by relationship to the parents from whom we have sprung, and to whom we owe common duties, as we have been objects of common cares. By the peculiar domestic attachments of this sort, and the mutual services thence arising, the world is benefited with the accession to its general happiness, of the reciprocal enjoyments of a regard that has already found friends, before it could have thought of seeking them. Surrounded by the aged, or at least by those who are aged in relation to his first years of boyhood, the child would have learned only to respect and obey. With the little society of his equals around him, he learns that independence and equality of friendship, which train him to the affections that are worthy of a free and undaunted spirit, in the liberty and equal society of maturer years. As a son, he learns to be a good subject; as a brother, he learns to be a good citizen.

The duties which we owe to more distant relations, vary, as might naturally be supposed, with the circumstances of society, according to the varying necessity of mutual aid. Where the protection of law is feeble, and it is necessary therefore for many to unite in common defence, the families that spring from one common stock continue to cling to each other for aid almost as if they lived together under the same roof; it is truly one wide family rather than a number of families: the history of the tribe, in its most remote years of warfare and victory, is the history of each individual of the tribe; and the mere remembrance of the exploits of those who fought with one common object, around the representative of their common ancestor, is, like the feeling of the fraternal or filial relation itself, prolonged from age to age; while the affection thus flowing from the remembrance of other years is continually strengthened by the important services which each individual is still able to perform for the whole, on occasions of similar peril. In other circumstances of society, the necessity of this mutual

aid is obviated by the happier protection of equal law ; and objects of new ambition, separating the little community into families that have their own peculiar interests, with little, if any, necessity for reciprocations of assistance, the duty of giving such assistance is at once less important, and no longer receives any aid from the powerful circumstances of association, which, in a different state of manners, rendered the most distant relative an object of almost sacred regard.

“It is not many years ago,” says Dr. Smith, “that in the Highlands of Scotland, the chieftain used to consider the poorest man of his clan as his cousin and relation. The same extensive regard to kindred is said to take place among the Tartars, the Arabs, the Turkomans, and, I believe, among all other nations who are nearly in the same state of society in which the Scots Highlanders were about the beginning of the present century.

“In commercial countries, where the authority of law is always perfectly sufficient to protect the meanest man in the state, the descendants of the same family, having no such motive for keeping together, naturally separate and disperse, as interest or inclination may direct. They soon cease to be of importance to one another ; and, in a few generations, not only lose all care about one another, but all remembrance of their common origin, and of the connexion which took place among their ancestors. Regard for remote relations becomes, in every country, less and less, according as this state of civilization has been longer and more completely established. It has been longer and more completely established in England than in Scotland ; and remote relations are, accordingly, more considered in the latter country than in the former, though, in this respect, the difference between the two countries is growing less and less every day. Great lords, indeed, are, in every country, proud of remembering and acknowledging their connexion with one another, however remote. The remembrance of

such illustrious relations flatters not a little the family pride of them all ; and it is neither from affection, nor from any thing which resembles affection, but from the most frivolous and childish of all vanities, that this remembrance is so carefully kept up. Should some more humble, though perhaps much nearer kinsman, presume to put such great men in mind of his relation to their family, they seldom fail to tell him that they are bad genealogists, and miserably ill informed concerning their own family history. It is not in that order, I am afraid, that we are to expect any extraordinary extension of what is called natural affection.”¹

The duties to which I next proceed, are those which flow from an affection that is one of the most powerful indeed of the affections which nature prompts, but to which she does not point out any particular individual as demanding it, without our choice. The only influence which she exercises is on our choice itself.

It is the conjugal relation of which I speak, — a relation of which the duties, like the duties of all our other reciprocal affinities, however minutely divided and subdivided, are involved in the simple obligation to make those who are the objects of it as happy as it is in our power to make them.

In these few simple words, however, what a complication of duties is involved, of duties which it is less easy for the ethical inquirer to state and define, than for the heart which feels affection to exercise them all with instant readiness. He who loves sincerely the object of any one of those relations which bind us together in amity, and who is wise enough to discern the difference of conferring a momentary gratification which may produce more misery than happiness, and of conferring that which is not merely present happiness, but a source of future enjoyment, needs no rule of duty, as far at least as relates to that single in-

¹ Theory of Moral Sentiments, vol. ii. pp. 70-72. 10th edition.

dividual, for the direction of a conduct, of which love itself, unaided by any other guidance, will be a quick and vigilant director.

The husband should have, then, as his great object and rule of conduct, the happiness of the wife. Of that happiness, the confidence in his affection is the chief element; and the proofs of this affection on his part, therefore, constitute his chief duty, — an affection that is not lavish of caresses only, as if these were the only demonstrations of love, but of that respect which distinguishes love as a principle, from that brief passion which assumes, and only assumes the name, — a respect which consults the judgment, as well as the wishes of the object beloved, which considers her who is worthy of being taken to the heart, as worthy of being admitted to all the counsels of the heart. If there are any delights, of which he feels the value as essential to his own happiness, if his soul be sensible to the charms of literary excellence, and if he consider the improvement of his own understanding, and the cultivation of his own taste, as a duty, and one of the most delightful duties of an intellectual being, he will not consider it as a duty or a delight that belongs only to man, but will feel it more delightful, as there is now another soul that may share with him all the pleasure of the progress. To love the happiness of her whose happiness is in his affection, is of course to be conjugally faithful; but it is more than to be merely faithful; it is not to allow room even for a doubt as to that fidelity, at least for such a doubt as a reasonable mind might form. It is truly to love her best, but it is also to seem to feel that love which is truly felt.

As the happiness of the wife is the rule of conjugal duty to the husband, the happiness of the husband is in like manner the rule of conjugal duty to the wife. There is no human being whose affection is to be to her like his affection, as there is no happiness which is to be to her like the happiness which he enjoys. All which I have said of

the moral obligation of the husband, then, is not less applicable to her duty ; but, though the gentle duties belong to both, it is to her province that they more especially belong, because she is at once best fitted by nature for the ministry of tender courtesies, and best exercised in the offices that inspire them. While man is occupied in other cares during the business of the day, the business of her day is but the continued discharge of many little duties that have a direct relation to wedlock, in the common household which it has formed. He must often forget her, or be useless to the world : she is most useful to the world by remembering him. From the tumultuous scenes which agitate many of his hours, he returns to the calm scene, where peace awaits him, and happiness is sure to await him, because she is there waiting, whose smile is peace, and whose very presence is more than happiness to his heart.

Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings—
Here reigns and revels.¹

The vows, which constitute a solemn part of the matrimonial engagement, give to this duty of reciprocal love the sanction of an additional authority ; but they only give an additional sanction, and increase the guilt of violating duties, which, without these vows, it would still have been guilt to violate.

The husband is to seek the happiness of his wife, the wife to seek the happiness of her husband. This rule is sufficiently simple and efficacious, where affection is sufficiently strong, as in the domestic scenes of harmony and delight which I have pictured. But there may be cases of occasional disagreement ; and then what is the duty ? In such cases, it is obviously necessary, that, for mutual peace, the will of one should be submitted to the will of the

¹ *Paradise Lost*, book iv. 763-765.

other ; and, if a point so important as this were left to the decision of the individuals themselves, without any feeling of greater duty on either side, the disagreement, it is evident, would still be continued, under a different name ; and, instead of combating who should concede, the controversy would be, of whom it was the duty to make the concession. It is of most important advantage, therefore, upon the whole, that there should be a feeling of duty to be called in for decision in such unfortunate cases ; and since, from various circumstances, natural and factitious, man is every where in possession of physical and political superiority ; since his education is usually less imperfect, and since the charge of providing for the support of the family, in almost every instance, belongs to him, it is surely, from all these circumstances, fit, upon the whole, that, if the power of decision, in doubtful matters, should be given to one rather than to the other, it should be with man that it is to rest, whatever number of exceptions there may be, in which, but for the importance of the general rule, it would have been of advantage that woman, in those cases the wiser and more virtuous, were the decider.

The power of decision, therefore, which, for the sake of peace, must be understood as resting somewhere, should rest with man ; but though it rest with him, it is only in unfortunate cases, as I before said, that the power of authoritative decision should be exercised. In the general circumstances of conjugal life, there should be absolute equality, because, where love should be equal, there should be that equal desire of conferring happiness, which is implied in equality of love ; and he who, from the mere wish of gratifying his feeling of superiority, can wilfully thwart a wish of her whose wishes, where they do not lead to any moral or prudential impropriety, should be to him like his own, or even dearer than his own, if they did not truly become his wishes, when known to be hers, would deserve no slight punishment, as the violator of conjugal obligation,

if he were not almost sufficiently punished in the very want of that better affection, the delightful feeling of which would have saved him from his tyranny of power.

“The husband, it has been said, should decide in affairs of importance; the wife in smaller matters. But the husband should decide, in consulting his wife, the wife in seeking what is to please her husband. Let them learn often the pleasure of mutual concessions. Let them say often, I wish this because it is right; but let them say sometimes, too, I wish this much, because I love you.”¹

The great evil, in matrimonial life, is the cessation of those cares which were regarded as necessary for obtaining love, but which are unfortunately conceived to be less necessary when love is once obtained. The carelessnesses of a husband are not less severely felt, however, because they are the neglects of one whose attentions are more valuable, as he who offers them is more valued; and frequent inattentions, by producing frequent displeasure, may at last, though they do not destroy love wholly, destroy the best happiness of love. No advice can be more salutary for happiness, than that which recommends an equal attention to please, and anxiety not to offend, after twenty years of wedlock, as when it was the object of the lover to awake the passion, on which he conceived every enjoyment of his life to depend. We gain at least as much in preserving a heart as in conquering one.

The cessation of these cares would be, of itself, no slight evil, even though love had originally been less profuse of them than it usually is, in the extravagance of an unreflecting passion. She who has been worshipped as a goddess, must feel doubly the insult of the neglect which afterwards disdains to bestow on her the common honour that is paid to woman; and with the ordinary passions of a human being, it will be difficult for her to retain, I will not say

love, for that is abandoned, but the decorous and dignified semblance of love, for him who has cared little for the reality of it. It is not easy to say by how insensible a transition, in many cases, this conjugal resentment, or forced indifference, passes into conjugal infidelity ; though it is easy, in such a case, to determine to whom the greater portion of the guilt is to be ascribed.

But it will perhaps be said, love is not dependent on our mere will, and how can we continue to love one whom no effort of ours can prevent us from discovering to be unworthy of our continued affection ? But by whom is this objection usually made ? Not by those who, in engaging to love, and honour, and cherish during life, have been careful in considering who it was to whom they entered under this solemn engagement. It is, in almost every instance, the objection of those who, when they formed the engagement, made a vow, of the real import of which they were regardless ; and who afterwards dare to plead one crime as the justification of another. There are duties of marriage which begin before the marriage itself, in the provision that is made for matrimonial virtue and happiness ; and he who neglects the means of virtuous love, in a state of which virtuous love is to be the principal charm, is far more inconsiderate and far more guilty than the heedless producer of misery, who forms a matrimonial connexion without the prospect of any means of subsistence for one who is to exist with him, only to suffer with him in indigence, and for the little sufferers who are afterwards to make indigence still more painfully felt. He who has vowed to love one to whom he pledges love, only because he knows that she is worthy of such a pledge, will not afterwards have reason to complain of the difficulty of loving the unworthy.

If, however, it be necessary for man to be careful to whom he engages himself by a vow so solemn, it is surely not less necessary for the gentler tenderness of woman.

She, too, has duties to fulfil, that depend on love, or at least that can be sweetened only by love; and when she engages to perform them where love is not felt, she is little aware of the precariousness of such a pledge, and of the perils to which she is exposing herself. It is truly painful then to see, in the intercourse of the world, how seldom affection is considered as a necessary matrimonial preliminary, at least in one of the parties, and in the one to whom it is the more necessary; and how much quicker the judgment of fathers, mothers, friends, is to estimate the wealth or the worldly dignity than the wisdom or the virtue which they present as a fit offering to her, whom wealth and worldly dignity may render only weaker and more miserable, but whom wisdom might counsel and virtue cherish. It is painful to see one who has, in other respects, perhaps, many moral excellencies, consent, as an accomplice in this fraud, to forego the moral delicacy which condemns the apparent sale of affection that is not to be sold, — rejoice in the splendid sacrifice which is thus made of her peace, — consign her person to one whom she despises, with the same indifference as she consigns her hand, — a prostitute for gold, not less truly because the prostitution is to be for life, and not less criminally a prostitute, because to the guilt and meanness of the pecuniary barter, are added the guilt of a mockery of tenderness that wishes to deceive man, and the still greater guilt of a perjury that, in vows which the heart belies, would wish to deceive the God on whom it calls to sanction the deceit.

When marriages are thus formed, it is not for the sufferer to complain, if she find that she has acquired a few more trappings of wealth, but not a husband. She has her house, her carriage, and the living machines that are paid to wait around her and obey her; she takes rank in public spectacles, and presides in her own mansion in spectacles as magnificent; she has obtained all which she wished to

obtain ; and the affection and happiness which she scorned, she must leave to those who sought them.

“There is a place on the earth, it has been said, where pure joys are unknown, from which politeness is banished, and has given place to selfishness, contradictions, and half-veiled insults. Remorse and inquietude, like furies that are never weary of assailing, torment the inhabitants. This place is the house of a wedded pair who have no mutual love, nor even esteem. There is a place on the earth to which vice has no entrance, where the gloomy passions have no empire, where pleasure and innocence live constantly together, where cares and labours are delightful, where every pain is forgotten in reciprocal tenderness, where there is an equal enjoyment of the past, the present, and the future. It is the house too of a wedded pair, but of a pair who, in wedlock, are lovers still.”¹

LECTURE XVII.

OF THE DUTIES OF FRIENDSHIP ; DUTIES OF GRATITUDE.

IN our arrangement of the duties which we owe to particular individuals, as reducible to five orders, those which arise from affinity, you will remember, constituted the first division.

The particular duties as yet considered by us, have all belonged to this first division, the duties of relationship, parental, filial, fraternal, conjugal ; in the exercise of which, and in the reciprocal enjoyment of them as exercised by others, is to be found that gracious system of domestic virtue, under the shelter of which man reposes in happiness,

¹ De St. Lambert, Œuv. Phil. tome ii. p. 68.

and resting thus, in the confidence of affection and delight, becomes purer of heart, and more actively beneficent, by the very happiness which he feels.

It is of these domestic virtues that we must think, when we think of the morals of a nation. A nation is but a shorter name for the individuals who compose it; and when these are good fathers, good sons, good brothers, good husbands, they will be good citizens; because the principles which make them just and kind under the domestic roof, will make them just and kind to those who inhabit with them that country which is only a larger home. The household fire, and the altar, which are coupled together in the exhortations of the leaders of armies, and in the hearts of those whom they address, have a relation more intimate than that of which they think, who combat for both. It is before the household fire, that every thing which is holy and worthy of the altar is formed. There arose the virtues that were the virtues of the child, before they were the virtues of the warrior or the statesman; and the mother who weeps with delight at the glory of her son, when a whole nation is exulting with her, rejoices over the same heroic fortitude, that at a period almost as delightful to her in the little sacrifices which boyish generosity could make, had already often gladdened her heart, when she thought only of the gentle virtues before her, and was not aware of half the worth of that noble offering which she was speedily to make to her country and to the world.

From the domestic affinities, the transition is a very easy one, to that bond of affection which unites friend to friend, and gives rise to an order of duties almost equal in force to those of the nearest affinity.

We are formed to be virtuous, to feel pleasure in contemplating those parts of our life which present to us the remembrance of good deeds, as we feel pain in contemplating other portions of it, which present to us only remembrances of moral evil; and the same principle which makes

us love in ourselves what is virtuous, renders it impossible for us to look with indifference on the virtues of another. The principle of moral emotion alone would thus be sufficient to lead to friendship, though there were no other principle in our nature that could tend to make a single human being an object of our regard.

But we are not lovers of virtue only ; we are lovers of many other qualities, which add to our happiness not so much as our own virtues indeed, but often as much as we could derive, in the same space of time, from the mere virtue of those with whom we mix in society. We love gaiety, and we therefore love those who can render us gay, by their wit, by the fluency of their social eloquence, by those never-ceasing smiles of good humour, which are almost, to our quick sympathy of emotion, like wit and eloquence ; we hate sorrow, and we love those who, by the same powerful aid, can enable us to shake off the burden of melancholy, from which our own efforts are, as we have too often found, unable of themselves to free us ; we have plans of business or amusement, and we love those whose co-operation is necessary to their success, and who readily afford to us that co-operation which we need ; we are doubtful, in many cases, as to the propriety of our own conduct, and if all others acted differently, we should be driven back to the uncertainty or the reproach of our own conscience, without any consolation from without ; we therefore love those who, by acting as we act, seem to say to us that we have done well ; or who, at least, when it is impossible for us to flatter ourselves with this illusion, comfort us with the only palliation which our conscience can admit, that we are not more reprehensible than others around us. Even without regard to all these causes of love, it is miserable to us to be alone. The very nature of all our emotions leads them to pour themselves out to some other breast ; and the stronger the emotion, the more ardent is this propensity. We must make some one know

why we are glad, or our gladness will be an oppression to us, almost as much as a delight. If we are in wrath, our anger seems to us incomplete, till not one only, but many, share our resentment. The sovereign would feel little pleasure in all the splendour of his throne, if he were to sit upon it for ever, with subjects around him to whom he was to be always a sovereign, and only a sovereign; and the very misanthrope, who abandons the race of mankind, in his detestation of their iniquity, must still have some one with whom he may give vent to his indignation, by describing the happiness which he feels, in having left the wicked to that universal wickedness which is worthy of them, and which he almost loves, because it enables him to hate them more thoroughly.

Thus lavish has nature been to us of the principles of friendship. With all these causes, that, singly, might dispose to cordial intercourse, and that exert in most cases an united influence, it is not wonderful that the tendency to friendship of some sort should be a part of our mental constitution, almost as essential to it as any of our appetites. It is scarcely a metaphor, indeed, which we employ, when we term it an appetite, an appetite arising from our very nature as social beings; and, if our appetites, like our other desires, bear any proportion to the amount of the good which is their object, it must be one of the most vivid which it is possible for us to feel; because it relates to a species of happiness which is among the most vivid of our enjoyments; in many cases approaching the delight of the most intimate domestic relations, and scarcely to be counted inferior to the delight arising from any other source, unless when we think of that virtue which is essential to the enjoyment of all. To take friendship from life, says Cicero, would be almost the same thing, as to take the sun from the world. "*Solem a mundo tollere videntur, qui amicitiam e vita tollunt.*" It is, indeed, the sunshine of those who otherwise would walk in darkness; it beams with unclouded

radiance on our moral path, and is itself warmth and beauty to the very path along which it invites us to proceed. He knows not how poor all the splendours of worldly prosperity are in themselves, who enjoys them with that increase of happiness which friendship has given to them ; and he who is still rich enough to have a friend, cannot know what extreme poverty and misery are ; because the only misery which is truly misery, is that which has no one to comfort it.

Celestial Happiness ! whene'er she stoops
To visit earth, one shrine the goddess finds ;
And one alone, to make her sweet amends
For absent Heaven,—the bosom of a friend ;
Where heart meets heart, reciprocally soft,
Each other's pillow to repose divine.¹

“Quantum bonum est, ubi sunt praeparata pectora, in quae tutò secretum omne descendat, quorum conscientiam minus quam tuam timeas, quorum sermo sollicitudinem leniat, sententia consilium expediat, hilaritas tristitiam dissipet, conspectus ipse delectet.” How great a blessing is it, to have bosoms ever ready for receiving and preserving faithfully whatever we may wish to confide ; whose conscious memory of our actions we may fear less than our own, whose discourse may alleviate our anxiety, whose counsel may fix our own doubtful judgment, whose hilarity may dissipate our sorrow, whose very aspect may delight.

There is unquestionably, in the very presence of a friend, a delight of this sort, which has no other source than the consciousness of the presence of one who feels for us the regard which we feel for him. “When I ask myself,” says Montaigne, after a very lively description which he gives of his affection for his friend,—“When I ask myself, whence it is that I feel this joy, this ease, this serenity, when I see him,—it is because it is he, it is because it is I, I answer ; and this is all which I can say.”

¹ Night Thoughts, Night ii.

On the delight which friendship affords, however, it would be idle to expatiate. There is no subject, scarcely even with the exception of love itself, on which so much has been written, by philosophers and declaimers of all sorts, in prose and poetry. I might repeat to you innumerable commonplaces on the subject, and prove to you logically, by many arguments, that what you have all felt to be delightful, is delightful. For the evidence of this, however, I may safely leave you to your own consciousness. You have many friendships, and perhaps your most important and permanent friendships, still to form; but if you have never yet felt what friendship is, there is little reason to think that you will ever feel it; and if you have felt it, though you may not yet have been in situations that might enable you to derive from it all the advantages which it is capable of yielding, the very consciousness of the regard itself will enable you to anticipate them all. He who has never been in poverty, in long and almost hopeless disease, in any deep distress of any sort, may yet know what consolation the attentions of friendship would administer to the sorrow which he has never felt; and if he ever feel the sorrow and the consolation, will not acquire any new knowledge of the extent of the delightful influence which he had long known how to appreciate, but only a new cause of gratitude to him, who, in doing much, had done only what it was expected of his ready tenderness and generosity to do. "There is, indeed," as it has been truly said, "only one species of misery which friendship cannot comfort,—the misery of atrocious guilt; but hearts capable of genuine friendship, are not capable of committing crimes. Though it cannot comfort guilt, however, which ought not to be comforted, friendship is still able to console at least the too powerful remembrance of our faults and weaknesses; its voice reconciles us to ourselves; it shows us the means of rising again from our fall; and our fall itself it leads others to forget, in the same manner as it leads us to forget it, by

recalling to us and to others our estimable qualities, and prompting us to the exercise of them. Friendship repairs every thing, remedies every thing, comforts every thing.”¹

Friendship, however, is not a source of pleasure only ; it is also a source of duty ; and it is chiefly in this respect that we are now to regard it.

The duties that relate to friendship may be considered in three lights ; as they regard the commencement of it, the continuance of it, and its close.

Our first duties are those which relate to the choice of a friend.

If we were sufficiently aware how great a command over our whole life we give to any one whom we admit to our intimacy ; how ready we are to adopt the errors of those whom we love ; and to regard their very faults, not merely as excusable, but as objects of imitation, or at least to imitate them without thinking whether they ought to be imitated, and without knowing even that we are imitating them ; we should be a little more careful than we usually are, in making a choice, which is to decide in a great measure whether we are to be virtuous or vicious, happy or miserable ; or which, in many cases, if we still continue happy, upon the whole, must often disturb our happiness, and, if we still continue virtuous, make virtue a greater effort. “The bandage which, in our poetic fictions, we give to Love,” says the Marchioness de Lambert, “we have never thought of hanging over the clear and piercing eyes of Friendship. Friendship has no blindness : it examines before it engages, and attaches itself only to merit.”²

The picture is a beautiful one ; but it is a picture rather of what friendship ought to be, than of what friendship always is. The bandage, indeed, is not so thick as that which covers the eyes of Love, and it is not so constantly

¹ De St. Lambert, *Œuvres Philosophiques*, tome iii. p. 82.

² De St. Lambert, *Œuvres*, tome i. p. 236. Paris, 1761.

worn ; but when it is worn, though it admits some light, it does not admit all. We must tear it off before we see clearly ; or we must be careful at least what hands they are which we permit to put it on.

It is before we yield ourselves, then, to the regard, that we should strive to estimate the object of it, and to estimate his value, not by the gratification of a single day, but by the influence which he may continue to exercise on our life. If friendship, indeed, were a mere pastime, that ended with the amusement of some idle hours, it might be allowed to us to select, for our companions, those who might best amuse our idleness ; it would be enough to us then that our friend was gay, and had the happy talent of making others gay. If it were a mere barter of courtesy, for a little wealth or distinction, it might be allowed to us, in like manner, to select those whose power and opulence seemed to promise to our ambition and avarice the best return of gain ; it would then be enough if our friend possessed a station that might enable him to elevate us, not perhaps to his own rank, but at least a little higher than we are. Then, indeed, the propriety or impropriety of friendship might be estimated as readily, and almost in the same manner, as we estimate the worth of any common marketable commodity. But if it be an alliance of heart with heart,—if, in giving our sorrows or projects to be shared by another, we are to partake, in our turn, his sorrows or designs, whatever they may be, — to consider the virtue of him whom we admit to this diffusion with us of one common being, and to yield our affection, only as we discover the virtue which alone is worthy of it, is almost the same thing as to consult for our own virtue. The vice of him whom we love, — the vice which we must palliate to every censurer, and which we strive to palliate even to our own severe judgment, will soon cease to appear to us what it is ; and it will require but a little longer habit of palliation, and a little longer intercourse of cordial regard, to win

from us that occasional conformity which, with us too, may soon become a habit. Even though we escaped from the vices of the wicked, however, it would be impossible for us to escape from their misery. We must share the embarrassments and vexations, the fear and the disgrace, to which their moral errors must inevitably lead them; and though the friendship of the virtuous had no other superiority of attraction than this one, it would still be enough to determine the choice of the wise,—that, in becoming the friends of the good, they would have nothing to fear but misfortunes, which require pity only, and consolation, not shame; that, if they had no reason to blush for themselves, they would have no reason to blush for those whom, by their selection, they had exhibited to the world as images of their own character; nor to feel, in the very innocence of their own heart, by the moral perplexities in which their sympathies involved them, if not what is hateful in guilt, at least all which is wretched in it.

A single line of one of our old poets conveys, in this respect, a most sententious lesson, in bidding us consider what sort of a friend he is likely to prove to us, who has been the destroyer, or at least the constant disquieter, of his own happiness.

——— See if he be

Friend to himself, who would be friend to thee.

The necessity of virtue, then, in every bosom of which we resolve to share the feelings, would be sufficiently evident, though we were to consider those feelings only; but all the participation is not to be on our part. We are to place confidence, as well as to receive it; we are not to be comforters only, but sometimes, too, the comforted; and our own conduct may require the defence which we are sufficiently ready to afford to the conduct of our friend. Even with respect to the pleasure of the friendship itself, if it be a pleasure on which we set a high value, it is not a

slight consideration whether it be fixed on one whose regard is likely to be as stable as ours, or on one who may in a few months, or perhaps even in a few weeks, withhold from us the very pleasure of that intimacy which before had been profusely lavished on us. In every one of these respects, I need not point out to you the manifest superiority of virtue over vice. Virtue only is stable, because virtue only is consistent; and the caprice which, under a momentary impulse, begins an eager intimacy with one, as it began it from an impulse as momentary with another, will soon find a third, with whom it may again begin it, with the same exclusion, for the moment, of every previous attachment. Nothing can be juster than the observation of Rousseau on these hasty starts of kindness, that "he who treats us at first sight like a friend of twenty years' standing, will very probably, at the end of twenty years, treat us as a stranger if we have any important service to request of him."

If, without virtue, we have little to hope in stability, have we, even while the semblance of friendship lasts, much more to hope as to those services of kindness which we may need from our friends? The secrets which it may be of no importance to divulge, all may keep with equal fidelity; because nothing is to be gained by circulating what no one would take sufficient interest in hearing, to remember after it was heard; but if the secret be of a kind which, if made known, would gain the favour of some one whose favour it would be more profitable to gain than to retain ours, can we expect fidelity from a mind that thinks only of what is to be gained by vice, in the great social market of moral feelings, not of what it is right to do? Can we expect consolation in our affliction from one who regards our adversity only as a sign that there is nothing more to be hoped from our intimacy; or trust our virtues to the defence of him who defends or assails as interest prompts, and who may see his interest in representing us as guilty of the very

crimes with which slander has loaded us? In such cases, we have no title to complain of the treacheries of friendship; for it was not friendship in which we trusted; the treachery is as much the fault of the deceived as of the deceiver: we have ourselves violated some of the most important duties of friendship, the duties which relate to its commencement.

When friendship has commenced, after all those necessary cautions which form its first set of duties, a new set of duties begin their obligation. We have chosen cautiously, and we are now to confide: we have chosen one whom it is virtuous to love, and we are to perform to him all the services of love.

We are to confide, in the first place, not with that timid, irresolute communication of our plans and wishes, which almost provokes to the very infidelity that appears to be suspected, but with that full opening of the heart, without which there is no confidence, and therefore none of the advantages of confidence. "If you think any one your friend," a Roman moralist says, "in whom you do not put the same confidence as in yourself, you know not the real power of friendship. Consider long, whether the individual whom you view with regard, is worthy of being admitted to your bosom; but when you have judged, and found him truly worthy, admit him to your very heart. You should so live, indeed, as to trust nothing to your own conscience which you would not trust to your enemy; but, at least to your friend, let all be open. He will be the more faithful, as your confidence in his fidelity is more complete." *Si aliquem amicum existimas, cui non tantundem credis quantum tibi, vehementer erras, et non satis nôsti vim verae amicitiae. Tu vero omnia cum amico delibera, sed de ipso prius. Post amicitiam credendum est, ante amicitiam judicandum. Isti vero praepostere officia permiscunt, qui, contra praecepta Theophrasti, cum amaverint judicant, et non amant cum judicaverint. Diu cogita, an tibi in ami-*

citiam aliquis recipiendus sit ; cum placuerit fieri, toto illum pectore admitte. Tam audacter cum illo loquere quam tecum. Tu quidem ita vive, ut nihil tibi committas, nisi quod committere etiam inimico possis ; sed quia interveniunt quaedam, quae consuetudo fecit arcana, cum amico omnes curas, omnes cogitationes tuas misce. Fidelem si putaveris, facies." ¹

He who is worthy of our confidence is worthy of our kindness ; and, therefore, of all the aid which our kindness can bestow. I need not say that we are guilty of a breach of duty, if, with the power of furthering his advancement in life, we withhold our assistance. If he be in want, we should consider it not as a favour on our part, but as an additional value which he has conferred on our wealth, that he has given us an opportunity of making a more delightful use of it than any to which we could have known how to apply it in any other circumstances. If he be in grief, we have an affection that knows how to diffuse a tender pleasure over sadness itself ; and that, if it cannot overcome affliction, can thus at least alleviate it. If he be suffering unmerited ignominy, we have a heart that knows his innocence, and a voice that can make itself be heard, wherever virtue is allowed to speak. These duties are easy to be performed. The only duty which is not easy, but which is still more necessary than the others, is that which relates to moral imperfections that may truly arise in him, or may become visible in him, only after our friendship has been given and received ; — imperfections which, slight as they may be at first, may, if suffered to continue, vitiate that whole character, which it is so delightful to us to love ; and which, in every important respect, is still so worthy of being loved. The correction of these is our chief duty ; and every effort which it is in our power to use for this moral emendation, is to be employed sedulously, anxiously, urgently ; but with all the tenderness which such efforts

¹ Seneca, Epist. iii.

admit. If, in presenting to him that form of perfect virtue, to the imitation of which we wish to lead him, we make him feel more his own imperfection than the tenderness of that regard which seeks his amendment above every other object, the error is not his alone.

The duty which leads us to seek the moral reformation of our friend, wherever we perceive an imperfection that requires to be removed, is, as I have said, the highest duty of friendship, because it is a duty that has for its object the highest good which it is in our power to confer; and he who refrains from the necessary endeavour, because he fears to give pain to one whom he loves, is guilty of the same weakness which, in a case of bodily accident or disease, would withhold the salutary potion, because it is nauseous, or the surgical operation which is to preserve life, and to preserve it with comfort, because the use of the instrument, which is to be attended with relief and happiness, implies a little momentary addition of suffering. To abstain from every moral effort of this sort, in the mere fear of offending, is, from the selfishness of the motive, a still greater breach of duty, and almost, too, 'a still greater weakness. He whom we truly offend by such gentle admonitions as friendship dictates, admonitions of which the chief authority is sought in the very excellence of him whom we wish to make still more excellent, is not worthy of the friendship which we have wasted on him; and, if we thus lose his friendship, we are delivered from one who could not be sincere in his past professions of regard, and whose treachery, therefore, we might afterwards have had reason to lament. If he be worthy of us, he will not love us less, but love us more; he will feel that we have done that which it was our duty to do: and we shall have the double gratification of witnessing the amendment which we desired, and of knowing that we have contributed to an effect which was almost like the removal of a vice from ourselves, or a virtue added to our own moral character.

The last set of duties, in relation to friendship, are those which regard its close.

When friendship has been fixed where alone it should be fixed, the close of friendship is only the termination of the existence of those who feel it. But, with all the caution which it is possible for the best and the wisest to employ in selection, it is still possible that they may be deceived, even as to important defects of character; or, though they may not be deceived as to the essential virtues of the character, they may at least have failed to remark unfortunate circumstances of temper or general disposition, which may frustrate afterwards all the care that can be used to avoid what might lead to irritations and fretful suspicions, incompatible with permanent confidence. Friendship, then—that is to say, the cordial intimacy of friendship—may cease, while those still live who were its subjects; but when it ceases, from causes that would render it impossible to be renewed with the same interest as before, or that would render the renewal of it unwise, even though it were possible, it should be a cessation of intimacy, and nothing more. The great duty of fidelity still remains; and, in some measure too, unless where there has been the provocation of injustice that cancels the past, because it shows the seeming affection of the past, even when affection was credited, to have been deceit, there remains still the duty of an interest stronger than we should feel in the welfare of a stranger who had never been connected with us by any tie of peculiar regard. Even when there has been such a discovery of guilt, as would render immoral this remaining interest, the duty of fidelity, as I have said, remains in all its force. What was confided to us in years of confidence, should still be as safe in our bosom as before. The only dispensation by which it can be morally allowable for us to violate the trust, is the slander of our reputation by the confider himself, if he dare to assail our character, when the disclosure of the secret which he has trusted to us, would

render manifest our innocence. His very attack, in that case, may be considered as a sort of tacit intimation to us that his trust is at an end.

When friendship, after continuing uninterrupted through life, not merely without diminution, but with perpetual accessions of confidence and happiness, is at last broken by the death of one of the parties, its duties do not terminate to the survivor. He has a source of new duties in the remembrances of the past, in the glory of his friend, which is ever present with him, and in the expectation of that future life in which he hopes to rejoin him, and which, by this very hope, presents a new motive to his own virtues.

“Some persons,” says the Marquise de Lambert, “believe that there are no longer any duties to be fulfilled beyond the tomb; and there are but few who know how to be friends to the dead. Though the most magnificent funeral pomp be the tears and the silent sorrow of those who survive, and the most honourable sepulture be in their hearts, we must not think that tears which are shed from the sensibility of the moment, and sometimes too from causes which, in part at least, relate to ourselves, acquit us of all our obligation. The name of our friends, their glory, their family, have still claims on our affection, which it would be guilt not to feel. They should live still in our heart by the emotions which subsist there; in our memory, by our frequent remembrance of them; in our voice, by our eulogiums; in our conduct by our imitation of their virtues.”¹

After our consideration of the duties of friendship, which necessarily involve in them many feelings of gratitude for kindnesses received, it cannot require any long discussion to convince you of the duty of gratitude to our benefactors in general.

¹ De St. Lambert, Œuvres, tome i. p. 248.

It is one of the most pleasing proofs of the benevolence of Heaven, that the very production of good by one human being to another, is not attended with delight only to him who receives the favour, but with equal delight to him who confers it; and with respect to the future also, that the desire of new beneficent exertions is not more deeply impressed on the mind of the beneficent, by every repetition of his kindness, than on the mind of him who is the object of the kindness. Both are made happier; both are made more eager to render happy. Our first emotion, on receiving good, is love of him from whom we receive it; our second emotion is the wish of being able to render to him some mutual service; and he whose generous life is a continued diffusion of happiness, may thus delight himself with the thought that he has not diffused happiness only, but that in diffusing it he has been, at the same time, the diffuser of virtue,—at least, of wishes which were virtue for the time, and required nothing to convert them into beneficence, but the means of exercising them.

So ready is gratitude to arise in almost every mind, that ingratitude to a benefactor, in every age of the world, has been regarded almost with the same species of abhorrence as the violation of the dearest duties of consanguinity itself. He who could plunge a dagger into the heart of one who had conferred on him any signal service, would be viewed by us almost with the same fearful astonishment with which we gaze on the parricide who plunged his dagger into the heart that gave him life.

The tie which connects the benefactor with him on whom he has conferred a kindness, does not, however, give its whole duties to one party, though its principal duties belong to one. It is the duty of one, to love him from whom he has received important kindnesses, to study the interests of him by whom his own have been promoted, and in every service which requires only zeal, and not a sacrifice of virtue, to be assiduous in repaying what can be repaid, not from an eager

wish to shake off the obligation, which is truly in itself a species of ingratitude, but from the sincere desire of increasing the happiness of one who is sincerely loved, and who has given so much reason to love him.

These are the duties of the obliged. But though we are not much accustomed to think of the duties of benefactors, the obliger too has moral obligations to fulfil, and obligations which, while they are as truly incumbent as the duties of the obliged, are far more difficult to be fulfilled; the duty of making his benefits press as lightly as benefits to the same amount can press, by unfailing attentions to him whom he has obliged, — a condescension that makes itself felt, however, not as condescension which would recall the obligation more painfully, but only as kindness which seems to arise without any thought of former benefits, from the overflowing goodness of a benevolent heart. It would be manifestly cruel to repeat continually to any one, on whom we had conferred an important favour, “Remember the favour which I conferred on you;” but since it is not in the direct words only that such a meaning can be conveyed, it is cruel also, by excessive and ill-placed forms of ostentatious civility, to seem constantly to say to him, that we are thus very kind, and that we have never forgotten the generosity which we showed him, at the distance, perhaps, of many years.

When a benefactor forgets his duties, and makes a cruel use of the favours which he may have conferred, there is no tyrant whose cruelty is more oppressive, because it is the tyranny of one whom we cannot oppose like other tyrants. They may, indeed, shackle our arms; but the iron clasp of this moral oppressor is placed where it is most painfully felt, upon the heart itself, that may feel the worthlessness, but that is deprived of all power of rising against it. There are beings of this kind who use the means of beneficence only for purposes the most malevolent, whose very gifts are snares; who oblige, that they may after-

wards be malicious with impunity, exacting ever after from their unfortunate victim, assiduities and services which it is miserable to pay, and rejoicing, if he fail in them, that they may have the still greater pleasure of proclaiming his ingratitude.

“Ingratitude, indeed,” as Rousseau justly observes, “would be far rarer than it is, if the benefactor were less frequently a usurer. What has done us good, is dear to us, by the very sentiment of our nature. Ingratitude is not in the heart of man ; but interest is there ; and the obliged who are ungrateful, are far fewer in number than the obligers, who are interested, and who have sold what they have only feigned to give. When is it,” he continues, “that we see any one who is forgotten by his benefactor, forget him ? A benefactor who can thus forget, the obliged never fails to remember ; he speaks of him with pleasure, as he thinks of him with tenderness. If an opportunity occur in which he can show, by any unexpected service, that he remembers the service which was before conferred upon himself, with what internal delight does he then satisfy his gratitude, with what expression of joy does he make himself recognised, with what transport does he say, *My turn is come !* Such is the genuine voice of nature. A kindness, that was truly a kindness, never yet found a bosom that was ungrateful.”¹

The expression, if it were meant to be understood strictly, would certainly be a little too strong ; since there may be ingratitude, even to the most generous, as there may be any other atrocious offence. But it is only in the bosoms of the most atrocious that such ingratitude can arise : and of this, at least, we may be sure, that the best preservative against a failure of duty on the part of the obliged, is for the obliger himself to fulfil all the duties of a benefactor.

¹ *Emile*, liv. iv. *Œuvres de Rousseau*, tome vii. p. 50. Paris, 1819.

LECTURE XVIII.

OF THE DUTIES OF CONTRACT ; OF THE DUTIES OF CITIZENSHIP.

WE have now considered the nature of the duties which arise from our peculiar connexion with certain individuals, as our relatives in consanguinity or wedlock, our friends, our benefactors. There remain still to be considered by us two species of duties, that arise from connexions of a more general kind ; the duties of contract, which, of course, vary with the nature of our particular engagements ; and the duties of citizenship, or of patriotic regard, which extend to all the individuals that are comprehended with us under one system of government.

Though the practical rules of morality, which regard contracts, strictly as contracts, are all founded on the great principle, that each party in the contract is under a moral obligation to fulfil what he has undertaken to perform, in the manner in which he had reason to believe the engagement to be understood by the party with whom he contracted, it may be of advantage to consider, separately, the contracts which relate to objects of commercial barter, and those which relate to personal service. Even personal services, indeed, are truly objects of barter, as much as any of the articles of daily sale, of which we usually think when we speak of commerce ; but still there are so many other circumstances of moral influence connected with the contracts of service, that they may very fairly, at least the most important of them, which connects the master and the servant, and admits a stranger into the general system of domestic relationships, be regarded, in ethics, as constituting a species apart.

The command which mere barter gives us, even when the objects of the barter are present objects exchanged for present objects, is no slight accession to the comfort of mankind. What is useless to ourselves is thus instantly invested with utility, by becoming the medium of acquiring for us what is directly useful. But such direct barter, of present objects for present objects, would be only a small part of the commerce from which our wants might receive aid, if no more than the possessions of the present moment were allowed to enter into the mutual transference. We may have present wants, which the superfluities of others might gratify, though we may be, at present, without the possession of any thing which can purchase them as a fair equivalent; and we may have this inability of present purchase, with the certainty, that we shall, at some period more or less near, have that which, if possessed by us now, would be gladly purchased from us, by the cession of those articles of use or luxury, which our wants of the moment require. A contract is truly, in its moral operation, such a transfer of the future for the present, or of some future object which we value less, for a future object which we value more. Its effect is to free us, in a great measure, from the influence of time, as far as our mere commerce is concerned; to render every thing which our power, in any moment of our life, may command, present, as it were, at the very hour in which we make our purchase; enabling us thus to form, of all the property which we are ever to possess, and of all the energies which we are ever to be capable of exerting, one great fund, which we may employ with equal and ready command, for all the purposes that seem to us, at any one moment, most essential to our happiness.

If that power, by which we are thus enabled to bargain for the future, be so important an instrument of public convenience, the breach of the contracts, on the stability of which, that is to say, on the good faith of which, the power

is founded, we may well suppose, will be regarded by the community as an injury to its essential interests; and the individual guilty of it, should feel, not merely the self-disapprobation which arises from the thought of having deceived, for purposes of selfish profit, any one member of the community, but that also which arises from the thought of having contributed to weaken the great support of public confidence, and to reduce the whole power of society to those few exertions which it is capable of making at any one instant, or the few immediate objects of barter which are at any one instant absolutely possessed.

Of that most useful power, which the general system of contracts gives us over time itself, he does all which an individual can do to deprive us; for he does that which, if all other individuals did in like manner, the power of bargaining for the future, which exists only by mutual confidence, would cease instantly in mutual distrust. From a command over every moment of our life, we should be reduced to a single moment of it, the moment in which we could give with one hand, while we received with the other.

Man, therefore, is morally bound to perform the engagements which he has undertaken to fulfil, whether there be or be not, in the individual with whom the contract was made, any power of enforcing the fulfilment. To this obligation, where it has been voluntarily made, there are truly no limits but the physical power of the individual, and the independent morality of that which is undertaken to be performed. Where we have undertaken to perform what no exertions on our part, however active and unremitting, could accomplish, we cannot feel remorse at not having done what we were unable to do; whatever moral disapprobation we may feel of our engagement itself, as undertaken rashly, and as tending to excite expectations in others, which, as they were beyond our power of

gratifying them, we had no title to excite. In like manner, when the action which we have undertaken to perform is one which, as affecting the happiness or means of happiness of others whose happiness we have no title to disturb, it would be immoral in us to perform, if we had not entered into the engagement, the performance of it would be immoral still, though we may have entered into the most solemn engagement; for there is no form of words, no promise, no oath, which can render just, what was injustice to others before. In such a case it cannot excite our remorse, that we have not done what it would be remorse to have done: our moral disapprobation of ourselves may arise indeed, and should arise; but it arises at the remembrance of the engagement itself, not at the thought of the failure in the engagement. We have now to regret one delinquency. But if we had performed what we had engaged to do, we should then, instead of one species of moral regret, have been subject to two feelings of that sort. We should have had to repent, as now, of the guilt of engaging to do what was morally wrong, and to repent also of the continued guilt of wilfully persisting in an action which we feel to be iniquitous.

When that which we have engaged to do is truly within our power, when it is undertaken voluntarily, and when the performance involves no violation of moral duty, it would be a violation of moral duty not to perform it; or, though perhaps with more verbal exactness, to perform it less fully than we know to have been understood and intended, in the spirit of the mutual convention. The contract may, indeed, if we consider the mere words of it, often imply more or less than was understood by the parties at the time; and though, in some cases, it may be legally expedient, for the advantage of the general rule, as applicable to cases in which the discovery of the intended meaning would not be easy, and in which, notwithstanding,

it is necessary that some exact meaning should be presumed,—that that meaning should be presumed to be what the strict grammatical or technical construction of the language bears,—it is legally only, not morally, that this forced interpretation in the particular case is put on words which, in that particular case, were intended to convey a different sense ; and he who, with perfect certainty of the intended meaning, shelters himself under the mere forms of legal construction, and does only what the law, in its necessary limitation to general rules and general forms of expression, obliges him to do, is, in every important respect, as truly a violator of the duty of contract, as if the construction of the law had exactly corresponded with that real meaning of the parties at the time of their mutual engagement, which, after entering into the engagement, he has refused to fulfil.

The contract of personal service, even of that domestic service which is the most complete of all voluntary servitudes, is, I have said, as a mere contract, precisely of the same nature as our other contracts. The servant who engages to obey the will of the master, that is to say, of one who, on his part, engages to furnish the servant with maintenance, and a pecuniary remuneration corresponding with the nature of the services performed, makes a barter of advantage for advantage. He gives up his liberty, for the time bargained, to receive, in return, what he values still more than liberty.

That the master and the servant are mutually bound to discharge to each other the peculiar offices which they have engaged to discharge, is a moral truth which flows from the very nature of a contract, and which needs no peculiar elucidation. But as, in the fulfilment of this particular contract, individuals are brought together who may be mutually benefited, in various ways, which the contract itself cannot strictly be understood as comprehending, and benefited, without injury to him who confers the benefit,

nature has not allowed this power of doing good to be wasted in unproductive idleness.

By various beautiful processes which take place in the mechanism of the moral universe,—by the influence of the associating principle, and by all those emotions of regard which the presence of familiar objects, merely as familiar objects, excites,—still more by that moral esteem, which it is impossible not to feel for the virtues that are frequently before us, whatever the rank may be which those virtues adorn, she has provided a source of peculiar duties, which make man, who lives with man, in the intercourse of mutual services, an object of a deeper interest than that which begins and ends with the few services which were reciprocally bartered.

That it is the duty of the servant, independently of the cold fulfilment of the mere drudgery which he executes for us—as he would have executed it for any other who paid the same price for each motion of his arm—to feel, too, some interest in our prosperity and general happiness; in our sickness, for example, not merely to watch around our bed, and to wish for his own sake that we were again enjoying health and easy slumbers as before, but to form that wish with sincere regret for the parched lip, and burning eye, and the feverish lassitude, that robs us of rest, even in rendering us incapable of action; that he should rejoice at our recovery, before he thinks that our recovery will restore him to the less fatiguing duties that are comparatively freedom; all this, though it formed no part of our original contract with him, we are sufficiently ready to claim, or at least to expect, because the duties of affection which we claim are duties which are to be profitable to ourselves. We are not quite so ready to admit, however, that our own duties to him are more than those for which we directly contracted, and that, without violating the obligation which the law would discover in

the very words or implied conditions of our bargain, we may yet violate the moral obligation which truly subsists in it, according to that only just interpretation which our own hearts, if we consulted them, would afford.

There are duties, then, which we owe to the lowest of those who serve us, that are not fulfilled by the most bountiful allotment of wages, and lodging, and sustenance.

Of these duties, which are not duties of supererogation, but flow from the very nature of the bond which connects the master and the servant by reciprocal benefits, the surest rule is to be found in that brief direction, which Seneca, in the spirit of the noble Christian precept of morals, has so happily given us in one of his Epistles, in which he treats of the cruelty and the contumely of Roman masters. "So live with your inferior, as you would wish your superior to live with you. *Sic cum inferiore vivas, quemadmodum tecum superiorem velles vivere.*" — "In a servant," says Marivaux, "I see a man ; in his master I see nothing more. Every one has his office to perform ; one serves at the table, one serves at the bar, one in the council, another in the field ; and he whom we call a servant, is perhaps the least a servant of the whole band of menials."

Those who serve us, it is impossible even for the haughtiest pride to deny, are indeed men like ourselves, differing from us, originally at least, only in the circumstances of their external condition, and differing, even in these, only for a period, that, in relation to the immortality of which it is a part, is scarcely more lasting than that short voluntary transformation of character, in which, for the amusement of a few hours, the richest and mightiest sometimes condescend to assume a servile garb, and act the part which their servants on the stage of life are acting in a drama a very little longer. They are masquers, whose masquerade does not finish in an evening ; but will finish when a few evenings are over, and when all will return to their original state of man. But without insisting on this similarity of

state, the human equality which is soon to level the distinctions that at present are regarded by us with so much pride, it will be enough to insist on the similarity of the principles on which their feelings and ours depend. They are capable, like us, of many pleasures, and of more than pleasure in receiving approbation : they have passions that mislead them as we have, and from us those passions may derive mitigation, or additional violence. On these considerations our duties to them are founded.

They are capable of enjoyment like ourselves ; and there are many enjoyments of which we may legally deprive them, by the constraints to which they have submitted themselves, according to the common usage of such personal contracts ; but which are not incompatible with the fulfilment of all their duties to us ; and which it would therefore, morally, be as wrong to prevent, as it would be to prevent a similar amount of enjoyment, when the power of preventing it was not legally ours. He who, to the utmost of his power, converts the freedom of domestic service into slavery, who allows no liberty, no recreation, no pleasure which he can interdict, has all the guilt of a tyrannical master of a slave ; or rather, has a guilt that exceeds the guilt of such oppression, because it is an oppression that is exercised in a land of freemen. Every indulgence, therefore, which does not interfere with the domestic duties, and which does not tend to vitiate the character, is a duty which the master owes.

As beings capable of pleasure, then, servants are to us the objects of this duty of reasonable indulgence. There is a certain moral pleasure, however, which we particularly owe to them.

They may do well ; and in doing well, they have the same title to our praise which our best actions have to the glory with which we expect the world to be ready to reward us. If we withhold the approbation which is due, we take from them one powerful incentive to continuance

of that species of conduct which rendered them worthy of approbation ; and, at the same time, we take from them one of the most delightful feelings of which he who has sold his freedom is still capable — the feeling, that he has done something, which was not actually sold with the very labour of his hands—that in the additional duties performed by him, he has been free still—and that our praise is something, which, as it was not an actual condition, like the livery and the daily bread, is an offering to his own gratuitous virtue.

The duty of approbation, then, when approbation is due, is another of the duties which the master owes to the servant, and a duty which, though he may legally withhold it, he is not entitled morally to withhold.

But servants, as I have said, share not our love of praise only, but passions of a less commendable kind. They are assailed by temptations like those which assail us ; and they sometimes fall as we too fall. They neglect to do what we have desired ; and they often do what is positively injurious to us. In such cases, they might deserve all our severity of punishment, if we were not men, and they were not men. Our reproof they unquestionably deserve, not merely because they have failed in their part of our mutual contract, but also because our reproof may, even to them, be attended with moral advantage. Yet though our reproof of any gross inattention is not excusable only, but if we consider all its consequences, an act of humanity, it is not to be the reproof of one who seems almost pleased with the offence itself in the eagerness which is shown to reprehend it. In censuring, we are silently to have in mind the human weaknesses of our own moral nature ; and to remember, that if even we, with better light and nobler recreations, err, the ignorant, who, by their very ignorance, are incapable of seeing many of the consequences of actions, and who have few recreations but those which seduce them from what is good, may still more naturally be imagined to

err. In condemning them, therefore, we condemn ourselves; or we declare that we are frail creatures, of whom less knowledge and less virtue are to be expected than of them. There are beings with gentle voices, and still gentler eyes; with smiles that seem never to be willed, and scarcely even to fade and brighten again, but to be almost the native character of the countenance, like the very lustre that is ever blooming on the cheek and on the lip, — there are beings who seem to exist thus only in a perpetual moral atmosphere of radiance and serenity, that, on the sight of a single particle of dust on a book, or a table, or a chair, as if in that particle a whole mountain of misery were before them, can assume in an instant all the frowns and thunders of all the furies; whose delicate frame is too weak to bear the violent opening of a door, but not too weak, after the door is opened, to shake the very floor with the violence of their own wrath on the unfortunate opener of it.

Indulgence to the lighter imperfections of servants is then an important part of our moral obligation in that temporary domestic relationship which we have contracted. But, though it is a duty which we owe to them, it is at least as much a source of tranquillity to ourselves. A life of constant upbraiding is very far from being a life of happiness. When we make them miserable, they have had already too good a revenge in the very fretfulness of the anger that is wreaked on them.

If the mere human tendency to evil that exists in the bosom of the servant, as it exists in his master's bosom, be a sufficient cause for the duty of indulgence, when indulgence would not be attended with hurtful consequences, as much to him whose offences are suffered to pass unrebuked, as to him who is directly injured; this tendency to evil is a source also of another duty, which is, in truth, the most important of all the duties that attend this domestic relation; the duty of not corrupting the virtue of him whose services only we have purchased; and whose moral part,

which was not, and could not be sold to us, we are not to enfeeble, if we do not strengthen it. He who, after living under the same roof with us for years, quits our door without the amiable qualities with which he first entered it, — every pure wish polluted, and new habits of licentiousness formed, while all that remains of early habits is a little remorse that is soon overwhelmed in the turbulence of vulgar dissipation, though he may be far better skilled than before in all the fashionable frivolities of his craft, and though he may have acquired, in our service, by plunder, not by economy, what would enable him to rise to a better station, if it were not soon to be exhausted by the vices which he gathered at the same time, quits us poorer upon the whole, and, as a mere human being, far lower in the scale of dignity than when, with all his clownish awkwardness, he had virtues which it has been our misfortune, or rather our guilt, to destroy.

The only remaining set of duties to particular individuals or classes of individuals which we have to consider, are those which connect us with our fellow-citizens.

That we should love the land of our birth, of our happiness, of that social system under which our happiness has been produced and protected, the land of our ancestors, of all the great names and great deeds which we have been taught most early to venerate, is surely as little wonderful as that we should feel, what we all truly feel, a sort of affection for the most trifling object which we have merely borne about with us for any length of time. Loving the very land of our birth, we love those who inhabit it, who are to us a part as it were of the land itself, and the part which brings it most immediately home to our affection and services. It is a greater recommendation to our good will, indeed, to be a relative, or a friend, or a benefactor ; but it is no slight recommendation, even without any of these powerful titles, to be a fellow-countryman, to have breathed the same air, and trod the same soil, and lent vigour to the

same political institutions, to which our own aid has actively or passively contributed. While all are fellow-citizens around us, indeed, we scarcely feel the force of the tie which binds us to each, because we are bound equally to all. But, let our relative situation be changed: place us on some shore at a distance, in a society as civilized as that which we have left, with a brighter sky and warmer air, and all the occupations which business can give, or all the amusements with which elegant frivolity can render days and evenings short to us;—in the very hurry of pleasure, that scarcely allows us time to think of home, let but a single accent be heard of the native dialect familiar to our ear; and, if we have been long absent from our country, what benefactor or friend is there, or almost I may say, what relative, however near to us in consanguinity and affection, who is for the moment or the hour so interesting to our heart as the stranger of whom we know nothing, but that he comes from the land which we love above every other land, and is to us almost the representative of that land itself?

Affection, though not the direct and exclusive source, is at least, by the bountiful provision of Heaven, the great accompaniment of duty; and where affection so strong is universally felt, there must be duties of no slight obligation.

Our countrymen may be considered by us individually, or as constituting one great community, in which the obligations due by us to all the separate individuals are concentered, so as to form together an amount of obligation which those who would think but little of their duties to a single member of the community, cannot, with all their indifference, wholly disregard.

As individuals, their claim to our services is the same in kind, however weaker in degree, as that which a common descent gives to those who are connected with us by remote affinities of blood. We are not merely to abstain from injuring, and to wish and endeavour to promote their happi-

ness when means of promoting it are in our power ; for these duties we owe to all mankind ; but when there is a competition of interests, and no obligations of more important duty are concerned, which should influence our choice, we are to prefer them to others who compete with them, our country being to us as it were a parent, and they, with us, its common offspring.

Beside this general interest in the happiness of all who live with us under the same government, — an interest in which you perceive the same beautiful relation of our affections to our means of readiest and most frequent usefulness, which we have traced in all the other species of peculiar regard, — there are patriotic duties which we owe to some of our countrymen only ; though, in truth, when we trace even these duties to their source, we find them too to have their origin in that equal regard for the happiness of all, which we owe to all our fellow-citizens. The duties to which I allude are the offices of external respect which we pay to those who are invested with high stations ; offices of respect which the multitude pay, without any very nice analysis of the obligation, and which it is of the highest importance to public order, and therefore to public happiness, that they should be ready thus to yield to the external symbols of authority ; and which a wise and good man pays with the same readiness as the multitude, because he knows at once how important they are to national tranquillity, and how very little it is which, in the external forms of respect, is paid to the real happiness of the individual.

Such are the civic duties which we owe to individuals. The duties which we owe to our fellow-citizens, as constituting one great community, may be considered as reducible to three : first, the duty of obedience to the system of laws under which we live, the benefit of which all enjoy, and according to which all regulate their plans and expectations ; secondly, the duty of defending that social system of which we are a part, from violent aggressions, foreign or internal ;

and, thirdly, the duty of endeavouring, as far as we possess any power that can be beneficially exerted, to increase the means of public prosperity; and above all, where political evils exist, to ameliorate a system of polity, which, though it produce much happiness, may still, by reformatations, as far as these are practicable, be capable of producing more.

Our first patriotic duty of this general kind, is the duty of obedience.

Why is it that we term obedience a duty? what circumstances are there in the nature of a system of government, by which, under certain limitations, it has a claim to our submission, merely because it already exists and has long existed?

The answer to this question was, for a long time, even in our own land, a very simple one, — that power established was established by God, and that disobedience to the individual whom he had established to exercise this power, would be a rebellion against right divine.

Who first taught souls enslaved, and realms undone,
The enormous faith of many made for one;
That proud exception to all Nature's laws,
To invert the world, and counterwork its cause?
Force first made conquest, and that conquest law,
Till Superstition taught the tyrant awe,
Then shared the tyranny, then lent it aid,
And gods of conquerors, slaves of subjects made.¹

The argument for the right divine of established power, which is in logic little better than any other argument for the right divine of any thing that exists, whether good or evil, merely as existing, — for the prevalent system of manners, virtuous or vicious, or even, as has been truly said, for the right divine of a wide-spread fever or any other pestilence, — is as wretched in its moral consequences, as it is ridiculous in logic; and it is painful to peruse the writ-

¹ Pope's Essay on Man, Ep. iii. 241-248.

ings on the subject which at one period, and that not a very distant one, were so prevalent, and in some cases were the works of authors whom we are accustomed to venerate, not merely as philosophers, but as men who have given undoubted proofs of the most benevolent interest in the human race. Berkeley, the author of the "Theory of Vision,"—Berkeley, the generous possessor of "every virtue under heaven," is the same Berkeley who endeavours to demonstrate to us, that it is as much our duty to submit to the most ferocious tyrant as to submit to the supreme benevolence of God; or rather, that to obey such a tyrant is to obey Supreme Benevolence.

That God, the equal God of all mankind, has not formed us to be the slaves of any one individual, and in furnishing our minds with so many principles that ensure our progress in less important sciences, has not abandoned us, in the most important of all, to the selfishness of a power which may prefer the present misery of its own despotic sway to all that can be offered for its reformation, because the reformation would abridge an authority which it is more convenient for the possessor of it to exercise with no limit but that of will, I surely need not now attempt to prove to you. On the right divine of authority, whatever vague allusions to it we may sometimes find in courtly flatterers of the day, we have no writers now who require to be confuted.

There is, indeed, one species of right divine which established authority does possess,—its tendency to the peace of those who submit to it, and, consequently, in that respect to their happiness, which, as the object of our Creator, has the sanction of divine will. But it possesses this right divine, only as tending to public happiness; it is secondary only, not primary: and when the public happiness, instead of being, upon the whole, promoted by obedience, would, upon the whole, when every consequence, indirect as well as direct, is taken into account, be promoted, by shaking

off that power which is inconsistent with its great object, remonstrance, even rebellion itself,—if that name can justly be given in such circumstances of dreadful necessity to the expression of the public will,—has as truly its right divine, as established authority, even in its best state, could be said to have it, when, as exercised with happier tendencies, it was productive of that good in which alone the divinity of its right is to be found.

We have no need, then, of all those fictions to which political writers, in periods in which the true source of political obligation was less distinctly perceived, were obliged to have recourse, in asserting the rights of the governed, as paramount to the claims of mere possession in the tyrannical governor. We have no need to speak of original compacts of those who obey with those who command, understood as prior to the existing forms of social institutions, and the violation of which by one party might be considered as a warrant to the other party for resuming the original rights of which they had consented, through their ancestors, to divest themselves. Such compacts never existed, and could not, independently of the good that might flow from them, be of obligation on the new individuals who form the present race of mankind, though they had truly taken place at some remote period. The only reason for which we could conceive it necessary for men at present to pay the obedience which another number of men, at any other period, paid to a certain number of their fellow-creatures who lived in their time, is, that a failure in this obedience, of the propriety of which the existing generation are equally capable of judging, or better capable, if political knowledge have made the slightest progress, would seem to be injurious to the society in which they live; and if this reason be valid, it is valid without the necessity of the compact supposed. It is our duty to obey, because mankind, at least that large part of mankind which we term our country, would suffer, upon

the whole, if we were not to obey. This is the powerful hold which even imperfect governments possess on the obedience of the wise and good; and the stronger holds which they may seem to have, by corruption, or by mere usage of unreflecting veneration, on the profligate and the ignorant, is truly not half so strong. The profligate supporter of a system, for which he cares only as it ministers to his vices, may see perhaps some more tempting promise of wealth and power in a rebellion against that very authority, the slightest attempt to ameliorate which he has been accustomed to represent as a species of treason. The ignorant, who fall on their knees to-day, merely because something is passing which is very magnificent, and before which other knees are bent or bending, may, to-morrow, when other arms are lifted in tumultuous rebellion, join their arms to the tumult and the dreadful fury of the day. It is only in the bosom of the wise and good, as I have said, that any security of obedience is to be found. He who is worthy of those honourable names, who is wise to consult for the public weal, which his goodness wishes, has no object but the happiness of the community; and though he may see imperfections in government which tend to lessen this happiness, he yet knows how much is to be hoped from the calm influence of diffusive knowledge, and how very little is to be hoped from the exercise of force, which would be opposed not by mere force of arms, but by the force of as many bad passions as could be summoned to resist it; and which would too often, also, be obliged to call to its own aid passions, as little worthy of the sacred cause in which they might be engaged, as the very passions that were opposed to him. He weighs good with good, evil with evil; and the oppression must indeed be severe, and the prospect of relief from it by other means be truly gloomy, before he will lift his voice to call his fellow-citizens to arm against their fellow-citizens. "The speculative line of demarcation, where obedience ought to end, and resistance

must begin, is," as Mr. Burke truly says, "faint, obscure, and not easily definable. It is not a single act, or a single event, which determines it. Governments must be abused and deranged, indeed, before it can be thought of; and the prospect of the future must be as bad as the experience of the past. When things are in that lamentable condition, the nature of the disease is to indicate the remedy to those whom nature has qualified to administer, in extremities, this critical, ambiguous, bitter potion to a distempered state. Times, and occasions, and provocations, will teach their own lessons. The wise will determine from the gravity of the case; the irritable, from sensibility to oppression; the high-minded, from disdain and indignation at abusive power in unworthy hands; the brave and bold, from the love of honourable danger in a generous cause;—but, with or without right, a revolution will be the very last resource of the thinking and the good."¹

A revolution, indeed, even in such circumstances, as this eloquent writer well says, should be, and will be, the last resource of the thinking and good. But, though it will be the last resource, it still is a resource; a resource in those miserable circumstances, in which times, and occasions, and provocations, teach their terrible lesson. When the rare imperious cases do occur, in which the patriotism that before made obedience a duty, allows it no more, to him who feels that he has now another duty to perform,—when he sees, with sorrow, that a cause which is good in itself, will demand the use of means from which, with any other motives, he would have shrunk with abhorrence, he will lift his voice, sadly indeed, but still loudly,—he will lift his arm with reluctance, but, when it is lifted, he will wield it with all the force which the thought of the happiness of the world, as perhaps dependent on it, can give to its original vigour; he has made that calculation in which

¹ Burke's Works, vol. v. p. 73. Lond. 1803, 8vo.

his own happiness and his own life have scarcely been counted as elements. If he survive and prevail, therefore, though in anticipating the prosperity which he has in part produced, he may sometimes look back on the past with melancholy, he cannot look back on it with regret; and if he fall, he will think only of the aid which his life might have given to that general happiness which he sought,—not of his life itself, as an object of regard, or even as a thing which it would have been possible for him to preserve.

LECTURE XIX.

OF THE DUTIES OF CITIZENSHIP—OBEDIENCE TO THE LAWS—DEFENDING
OUR COUNTRY—AUGMENTING THE GENERAL HAPPINESS.

IN the close of my last Lecture, I had begun the consideration of those duties which we owe to the community of our fellow-citizens, the duties understood as comprehended under the single term patriotism.

These duties of man, as a citizen, are considered as referable to three heads; first, the duty of obedience to the particular system of laws under which he may live; secondly, the duty of defending the social system under which he lives, from every species of violent aggression; and, thirdly, the duty of increasing, to the best of his power, the means of public happiness in the nation, by every aid which he can give to its external or internal resources, and especially as the most important of all ends, by every amelioration which it can be nationally prudent to attempt, of any existing evils, in its laws and general forms of polity.

In examining the first of these duties, we were, of course, led to inquire into the nature of that principle, from which existing institutions derive a moral authority. Of the

divine right, to which it was long the easy and courtly practice of almost all the writers on this subject, to refer what, as divinely constituted, was therefore, they contended, to be deemed sacred from all human interference of the governed, as truly sacred as religion itself, I did not think it necessary to occupy your time with any long and serious confutation. "The right divine of kings to govern wrong," cannot be a right derived from the Divinity. He who attached the delightful feeling of moral approbation to every wish of diffusing happiness, cannot give the sanction of his own pure authority to crimes which, as established, have nothing to distinguish them from other crimes that have not been established, except that their atrocious oppression has been more lastingly and extensively injurious. When a whole nation is bowed down in misery and intellectual and moral darkness, which, by the length of its uniform and dreary continuance, marks only what principles it contains of a servitude that may be perpetuated for ages as uniformly wretched, if a single effort, the elevation of a single standard, the utterance of a single word, were all which was necessary to give to millions that exist, and millions of millions that are afterwards to exist, not the happiness of freedom only, but with freedom all that light of thought and purity of generous devotion, which liberty never fails to carry along with it; would it indeed be virtue to keep down that standard, to refrain from uttering that word so productive, and rather to say calmly to the world, be miserable still? The God who is the God of happiness and truth and virtue, could not surely, in such circumstances, have made it guilt in the patriot to wish the single effort made; or guilt in him, if he wish it made, to give his own heart, and arm, or voice, to that effort which he wished.

It is vain for us, when our object is to discover, not what man has done, but what man ought to do, to think of the origin of power, as if this were sufficient to determine the

duty of our present acquiescence. Where all were not equal in every physical energy, one individual must soon have begun to exercise authority over other individuals. If we consider a number of children at play, where all may at first have the appearance of the most complete equality, we shall soon be able to discover how the stronger, in any period of life, or in any circumstances of society, might, in some cases, assume dominion which, in some other cases, might be given to superior skill. But, in whatever way power may have begun among mankind, it has usually, at least for many ages, in countries that suffer under despotism, been perpetuated by the submission on the part of the slave to the mere might of its hereditary or casual possessors: the history of power is, therefore, the history of that to which men have, generally or individually, considered it expedient to submit; but it is not on that account necessarily the history of that to which it was the duty of man to submit. It leaves to the race of man, in every age, and in all the varying circumstances of their external and internal condition, to consider the duties of mankind in the same manner as they would have considered them in any former age; and the duty of man as a citizen, is not to prefer the happiness or supposed happiness of one to the happiness or supposed happiness of many, but the happiness of many to the happiness of one, when these are opposed and incompatible. The happiness of many may, indeed, be best consulted, and truly is best consulted, by distinctions and honours, which may seem to the inconsiderate as if existing only for the happiness of one or of a few. But still it is of the wider happiness produced by them which the patriot is to think, when he establishes these very distinctions, or wishes them to be prolonged.

It is vain, then, to have recourse to any fictions to prove the duty either of obeying the sovereign power of the state in ordinary circumstances, or, in rare and unfortunate circumstances, of occasional resistance to it; since these duties

must always be reducible to the paramount obligation on the citizen, to consult the good, not of a few of his fellow-citizens, but of all, or the greater number; an obligation without which the fiction would be worse than absurd, and with which it is unnecessary.

The theory of a social contract, of the governed and their governors, for example, in which certain rights were supposed to be abandoned for certain purposes of general advantage, we found to be, even when considered as a mere fiction, (and it is only as a mere poetic fiction that it can be considered,) but an awkward circuitous mode of arriving at a truth, without the previous belief of which, the very contract supposed would be absolutely nugatory. It assumes, in this contract, original rights of the community, which, but for the contract, it would have been unjust in the governors to arrogate to themselves; and if these be assumed as inherent in the very nature of man, independently of all social institutions, we must still, as men, have the rights which mankind, simply as mankind, originally possessed. The feigned contract adds nothing, it presupposes every thing. The power which we obey, is a power which exists by our will, as much as the power which our earliest ancestors obeyed, existed only by the will of the subjects, who at once formed it, and gave it their obedience.

The fiction of a social contract, then, as I have before said, is only a circuitous mode of asserting the original rights, which that very contract takes for granted in the contractors. Equally false is the supposed analogy, by which some political writers would argue, from mere prescription in cases of property, for a similar prescriptive right to sovereign power, as implied in the long-continued possession of it. There still remains the inquiry, why prescription itself is legally recognised. It is for the good of the state, and only for the general good, to prevent the evil of insecure possession, and frequent litigation, that such

a bar to judicial scrutiny is allowed ; and if it were for the good of all the citizens, that prescription should not operate, even in cases of property, there can be little doubt that it would not have been legally established. The legal authority of prescription, then, when we trace it to its source, is not a proof of the moral right of the exerciser of hereditary tyranny, to continued violation of public happiness, and therefore, to unlimited submission, from the nation of slaves, the offspring of a nation of slaves. It is, on the contrary, a proof of the paramount obligation of that general good, which in the right of prescription, as in every other legal right, has been professedly the great object of legislation, and which, in some circumstances, may render resistance a duty, as, in the ordinary circumstances of society, it renders obedience a duty, and resistance a crime.

That the power of the sovereign exists by our will, however, is not enough of itself to confer on us the right of disobeying it ; and this, for a very plain reason, that, even when the government obeyed is not, like that of our own noble constitution, one which is a source of greater happiness to him who obeys than to him who governs, the disobedience may be productive of misery, which even the slave of a bad government has no right to produce. Our duties are not all dependent on our mere power or our mere will. If I learn that my benefactor is in indigence, it depends on my will whether I afford any relief to his wants ; but it does not therefore follow that I have a moral right to refuse relief. In like manner, I have no moral right to produce that wild disorder, which mere disobedience to law, if general, would occasion ; still less to produce the bloodshed and the desolation, and the bad passions, worse than mere bloodshed and desolation, which would be the inevitable consequence of long-protracted civil dissensions. This general tendency of obedience to power and happiness is, as I remarked in my last Lecture, the true right divine

of authority ; a right which is divine, because the virtue which loves the peace and happiness of all is itself of divine obligation.

Since the duty of political obedience, however, important as it is in the list of moral duties, is still a duty which derives its force from our general regard for the happiness of the community, this happiness of the community, which, in ordinary circumstances, gives obligation to the claim of mere power to our obedience, in other circumstances limits the obligation, and produces a moral duty that is altogether opposite. On the duties of the citizen, in circumstances so different from those in which our inestimable constitution has placed us, we may still ethically speculate, as in our systems of meteorology we treat, under our own temperate sky, of the sultry heats and hurricanes of a tropical climate.

The cases, however, in which it is morally right to resist, by other means than those which the established constitution itself affords, the tyranny of a government, are, in any situation of society, but of rare occurrence ; since it is not tyranny alone which justifies rebellion, but tyranny in circumstances in which rebellion against its cruel and degrading power affords a prospect of success, not merely in the removal of a single tyrant, but in the establishment of a happier system. In every insurrection against the most cruel despot, a certain quantity of evil must be produced ; and the evil is sure, while the good that is hoped is doubtful. If the insurrection fail, the evil is produced, and produced without any compensation, or rather, perhaps, serves only to render oppression more severe, and the hearts of the oppressed more fearful. The tyrant, after he has crushed all the little virtue that existed within the sphere of his dark dominion, may do, in the insolence of his triumph, what before he would have feared to do ; he may destroy at once what, by a little longer continuance, could scarcely have failed to diffuse a wider virtue, which his

efforts would have been powerless to crush. The increased severity of the oppression, then, is one evil of such unsuccessful attempts ; and it is not less an evil, that they render for ever after, as I have said, the oppressed more fearful. The image of past defeat rises with an enfeebling influence on those who otherwise would have lifted a far stronger arm ; while the remembrance of the treacheries which probably attended that defeat, and sometimes of the treacheries of those whose enthusiasm in the cause seemed most generous and daring, diminishes the confidence which man might otherwise be inclined to place in man. The resistance which might speedily have been successful, but for a rash attempt in unfortunate circumstances, may thus prove unsuccessful, merely because others had essayed and failed. Without the high probability, therefore, of a great preponderance of good, it cannot be morally right, in any circumstances, even of the most afflicting tyranny, to encourage a disobedience which the good that is to flow from it alone can justify. In the despotisms of the East, and in all the savage despotisms in which men, accustomed to look on power only as something that is to be endured, obey as brutally as they are brutally governed, what virtue could there be in rousing a few wretches to attempt what could not but fail in their hands, even if their number were comparatively greater, and in thus producing a few more murders, and a little more terror than would have existed, but for the foolish effort ?

True fortitude is seen in great exploits,
Which justice warrants, and which wisdom guides ;
All else is towering frenzy and distraction.¹

In ages of extreme luxurious profligacy, it would be, in like manner, vain to call to those who have no virtues, to arm themselves, from a virtuous hatred of oppression,

¹ Tragedy of Cato.

against a tyrant whom other tyrants would speedily replace. Truth in the one case, in the other case virtue, must be previously diffused; and if truth and virtue be diffused, their own silent operation may gradually succeed in producing that very amendment, which mere force, with all the additional evils which its violence produces, would have failed to effect. They form, indeed, the only useful, because the only permanent force, operating on the mind, in which all real strength is, and operating on it for ever.

The great evil is, that for the diffusion of truth and virtue, a certain portion of freedom is necessary, which may not every where be found; but, where there is not the truth or virtue, nor so much freedom as would allow the diffusion of them, what lover of the temperate liberty of mankind could hope, by mere violence, to produce it! A single tyrant, indeed, may be hurled from his throne; for this the very ministers of his power, by whom he has been what he was, themselves may do, while they bow the knee the very moment after to some new tyrant of their own number: but it is tyranny which the patriot hates; and if that still subsist, the murder of a thousand tyrants would make tyranny an object only of more sickly loathing.

It is enough, then, to find in the source of political authority, a justification of disobedience to it, in the extreme cases, in which alone it is morally allowable, or rather morally incumbent on the oppressed to disobey. It is in extreme cases only, that this sanction can be required; and, in all the ordinary circumstances of society, to yield to the authority which all have concurred in obeying, when every constitutional method of obviating or mitigating the evil has been exerted, is at once the most virtuous, as it is the simplest mode of conduct that can be pursued.

The next patriotic duty which I mentioned, was the duty of defending the state against every aggressor.

This duty of defending the land which we love, may

indeed be considered as implied in the very love which we bear to it. It is not necessary that we should think of what we have personally to lose before we consider the invader of our country as our enemy. It is not necessary even that we should image to ourselves the desolation which he is to spread, the miseries of blood and rapine by which his conquest would be perpetrated, and the deeper miseries of oppression which would follow it. It is enough for us to think of him as the invader of our land ; and in thus thinking of him, we have already felt the duty of opposition. We may, indeed, afterwards trace in our imagination the sad series of consequences to those whom we directly love, and to those whom we love with a sort of indirect and borrowed affection, when we know nothing more of them than that they are our countrymen. We may think more abstractly of the excellencies of our frame of laws which would be broken down, and feel an indignation at the outrage, as if this very frame of beautiful mechanism which we admire were itself a living thing. But though our indignation may thus be more fully developed, as we develop new causes of indignation, the strong emotion itself existed before. If the foot of an enemy, with an enemy's purpose, be pressing our soil, we feel in the very moment in which we learn it, if our hearts be not thoroughly corrupt, that he who has presumed thus to advance, must either retreat or perish.

In states in which the citizens themselves are trained to habits of military defence, the emotion of course is stronger, because the importance of individual exertions is there most powerfully felt. But the feeling is one which exists in some degree in every people. Even under the most wretched system of government, which has united men as a nation, only to make the congregated multitude of slaves an easier instrument of tyrannic power than if they existed as individuals apart, there is still some patriotic reluctance felt to allow the ingress of a foreign tyrant, though only a tyrant of the same species with him who is obeyed with ready

submission, merely because he is a part of the country itself; and he who, in such a case, has calmly suffered the march of the invader, which he might have assisted in repelling, will, in seeing him take possession of a land which he can scarcely make more desolate than its own sovereign had allowed it to continue, feel some little portion of that self-disapprobation which the inhabitant of a land of freedom would have felt, if, in similar circumstances of aggression, he had given the aggressor as little reason to know, that the land which he was invading was not a land of slaves, but the birth-place of men, and the dwelling-place of men.

The citizen, then, is to obey the laws and to defend them. These two duties relate to the political system that exists. He has still one other great duty, which relates not to things as they are, but to things as they may be. He is not to preserve the present system only; he is to endeavour, if it require or admit of amelioration of any sort, to render it still more extensively beneficial to those who live under it, and still more worthy of the admiration of the world than with all its excellence it yet may be.

He is justly counted a benefactor to his nation, who has been able to open to its industry new fields of supply, and to open to the products of its industry new distant markets of commercial demand. He, too, is a benefactor to the community who plans and obtains the execution of the various public works that facilitate the intercourse of district with district, or give more safety to navigation, or embellish a land with its best ornaments, the institutions of charity or instruction. In accomplishing, or contributing our aid to accomplish, these valuable ends, we perform a part of the duty which we are considering, the duty of augmenting, to the best of our ability, the sum of national happiness. But important as such exercises of public spirit are, they are not so important as the efforts of him who succeeds in remedying some error in the system of government, — some error, perhaps, which has been, in its more

remote influence, the retarding cause, on account of which those very public plans, which otherwise might have been carried into effect many ages before, were not even conceived as possible, till they were brought forward by that provident wisdom and active zeal which have obtained, and justly obtained, our gratitude.

The reform of a single political grievance may, in its ultimate effects, be the producer of all which we admire in the thousand acts of individual patriotism, — the opener of fields of industry, — the diffuser of commerce, — the embellisher of a land, — the enlightener and blessing of those who inhabit it.

It is not possible, indeed, to estimate how valuable an offering he makes to society, who gives it a single good law. They are but a few words, perhaps, that compose it, but in those few words may be involved an amount of good, increasing progressively with each new generation; which, if it could have been made known, in all its amplitude, to the legislator at the time when he contrived his project, would have dazzled and overwhelmed his very power of thought. What is true of a new law that relates to some positive institution is, as may be supposed, equally true of those laws which merely repeal and remedy the past; since a single error in policy may, in its long continuance, produce as much evil as a single wise enactment may, in its long continuance, produce of good.

He, then, is not a true lover of the society to which he belongs, nor faithful to those duties which relate to it, who contents himself with admiring the laws which he might amend; and who, far from wishing to amend them, regards perhaps, or professes to regard, every project of reformation, not as a proposal which is to be cautiously weighed, but as a sort of insult to the dignity of the whole system, which is to be rejected with wrath, and treated almost as a subject of penal censure. This blind admiration is not patriotism, or, if it be patriotism, it is, at least, only that easy form of

it which the most corrupt may assume, without any diminution of their own political profligacy. He who does not feel, in his whole heart, the excellence of a wise and virtuous system of polity, is indeed unworthy of living under its protection. But he who does feel its excellence, will be the swiftest to discern every improvement that can be added to it. It is the same in the humbler concerns of private life. It is not the indifferent stranger, who, on seeing any one suffer from inconvenience of any kind, perceives most quickly the first involuntary intimation of uneasiness, and discovers, too, most quickly, what may be the best remedy. It is he who loves best the sufferer, and who sees best every noble endowment possessed by him : it is the mother watching her child, — the friend visiting his friend, — the son, the lover, the husband. The very nature of affection is to render us quick to imagine something which may make still better what is good ; and though he who admires least a system, may innovate most extensively, there can be no question that the most continued tendency to innovate, in some slight degree, is in him who admires most, upon the whole, what he therefore wishes most ardently to improve.

If such be, as I cannot but think, the tendency of affection, the loud and haughty patriotism of those who profess to see in any of the systems of human policy, which, as human, must share in some degree the general frailty of humanity, no evil which can require to be remedied, and even no good which can by any means be rendered still more ample in extension or degree, seems to me, for this very reason, suspicious ; at least as suspicious as the loud and angry patriotism of those who profess to see in the whole system nothing which is not a fit subject of instant and total alteration. If they love truly what they praise so highly, they would not praise it less, indeed, but they would wish, at least, to see it still more worthy of praise ; there would be a quickness, therefore, to discover what would make it more worthy ; and, though they might be fearful

of innovating, they would yet have many wishes of innovating, which nothing but the value of the subject of experiment, as too noble to be put in peril, could operate to suppress.

It is this high importance of the subject of experiment, which is the true check on the innovating spirit, that, but for such a check, would be constantly operating in man, though there were no other inducement than the mere eagerness of curiosity, which wishes to see constantly new results, and is therefore constantly employed in placing objects in new circumstances. If the happiness and misery of nations were not dependent on the varying movements of the political machinery, or were dependent only for a few moments, so that, by the mere will of replacing all things in their former situation, we could truly replace them without any diminution of good or increase of evil, the game of legislation would indeed be the most magnificent game which could amuse our idleness or activity. But since happiness, which has once been injured, cannot be easily, if at all repaired, nor misery, once produced, be immediately dissipated, with the same ease with which we can shuffle kings, and queens, and knaves, and all the more insignificant cards, from the top to the bottom of the pack, or from the bottom to the top, and find the whole, after these successive changes, the same cards as before, with the same gaudy colouring and insignia of distinction, the game is too costly a one for human benevolence to wish to play.

The same principle, I may remark, directs the patriot in the reformatations which he wishes to produce, without departing from the regular usages of the constitution, that directs him in those rare and dreadful cases, in which it becomes to him a question of virtue, whether he is not to throw off the whole entanglement of usage, and reduce society again for a time to a state of barbarous contention of man with man, that, from this temporary disorder, a better and more regular system may arise. The directing

principle, in both cases, is the love of the good of the state and of mankind, that total and ultimate result of good on which it may be reasonable to calculate, after every deduction has been made of the evil that may, directly or indirectly, flow from the trial. It is not enough, then, that there is a great and manifest defect in any part of the political system ; a source of evil as manifest, perhaps, as the evil itself. This may be sufficient to the demagogue, whose only object is to produce popular discontent with a system in which he has no part to act ; and who is, therefore, rather pleased to discover the evil that may give a few animated periods to his eloquence, than grieved at the miseries on which so much of his logic and rhetoric depends. But, to the sincere lover of the happiness of the community, there must be not only the certainty of existing evil, but an obvious facility, or at least a very high probability of amendment ; and a probability of this, without an amount of accompanying evil equal, or even nearly equal, to the evil which he wishes to remove, before he will attempt a reformation that may be so perilous to the very happiness which it is his great ambition to promote. In calculating the results of good and evil, he will be careful too to make allowance for the influence of habit itself ; and will consider an evil that is new, such as his wished reformation might possibly produce, as when all other circumstances are the same, a greater evil than that which already exists, and to which the mind of the sufferer has learned, by long usage, to accommodate itself. Above all, he will make allowance for the possible fallacies of his own judgment. That others have not before regarded as evil, that which appears to him to be evil, though not enough to alter his judgment, will at least be felt by him as a circumstance which should render caution in this case more necessary than it would have been, if there had before been no existing government, but all was to be the instant result of one act of legislation.

The remarks which Dr. Smith has made on the peculiar

danger of the reforming spirit in princes, in reference to this deduction from the amount of incitement to innovate, which the possible fallacy of our opinion should produce,— a possibility which they who are accustomed to constant obsequiousness and adulation of all around, are not very ready to suspect, — are fully justified by the history, with very few exceptions, of all such attempts of royal or imperial reformers.

“It is upon this account,” he says, “that of all political speculators, sovereign princes are by far the most dangerous. This arrogance is perfectly familiar to them. They entertain no doubt of the immense superiority of their own judgment. When such imperial and royal reformers, therefore, condescend to contemplate the constitution of the country which is committed to their government, they seldom see any thing so wrong in it as the obstructions which it may sometimes oppose to the execution of their own will. They hold in contempt the divine maxim of Plato, and consider the state as made for themselves, not themselves for the state. The great object of their reformation, therefore, is to remove those obstructions, to reduce the authority of the nobility, to take away the privileges of cities and provinces, and to render both the greatest individuals, and the greatest orders of the state, as incapable of opposing their commands, as the weakest and most insignificant.”¹

In these cases, however, it is not, I conceive, the mere arrogance of opinion of which Dr. Smith speaks, that renders princes such rash and rapid innovators. Much of the tendency, I have no doubt, arises from the facility which they have found in executing the smaller matters, which they are in the hourly habit of willing and producing; a facility which they naturally extend to other matters, in which they suppose that all things will arrange

¹ Theory of Moral Sentiments, vol. ii. p. 96.

themselves as readily, according to their will, as the actions and looks of those whose courtly ministry it is to do and look as they are ordered. They do not merely think themselves better movers of the machinery than others, but the machinery of national happiness seems to them more simple and easy of management than it is; because they have been able, in innumerable cases, to produce the very object which they desired, in all the circumstances which they desired, or to prevent what they considered as an evil to themselves or others, in the very way in which it seemed to them necessary or most expedient to prevent it. They innovate, therefore, with a more fearless spirit, because they think that the political machine will readily produce whatever they wish it to produce; or, at any rate, that the touch of a single spring, or the application of a weight to a single pulley, will be sufficient to put the machine in its former state, if the movement which they have attempted should be found ineffectual to produce that particular equilibrium, or disturbance of equilibrium, which they desired to effect by it.

The reformations which alone a sincere patriot will think of attempting, must be preceded, then, by much cautious examination of all the evils which the very desire of producing good, and good only, may often tend to occasion, almost as certainly as if the desire had had in view evil, and nothing more. I need not surely add, since it is of a moral duty I am treating, that the patriotic reformer will not be influenced by his own private views of ambition or factious dislike; though these, it must be confessed, are the great movers of far more than half of that declamatory eloquence on public abuses, which, as we cannot see the heart, is often honoured with the name of patriotism. "Arsaces," says Montesquieu, in his political romance of that name, "Arsaces loved so much to preserve the laws and ancient customs of the Bactrians, that he trembled always at the very name of reform of abuses; for he had

often remarked, that every one called that law, which was conformable to his personal views, and called an abuse whatever was likely to thwart his own interests."

It is this hypocrisy of patriotism, which has been the most fatal of all evils to the reformation of a country. It is so easy to declaim against abuses, and so many personal objects may be attained by the declamation, that, to the unreflecting, it seems almost a sort of logical victory for the defender of real abuses to ascribe to such ambitious or sordid or factious motives the genuine hatred of corruption, and genuine love of man, in those who oppose the evils by which the defender of them exists. This imputation of unworthy designs or wishes is one of the greatest, or rather, is truly the greatest evil which a patriot, who is at heart a patriot, has to dread. But it is an evil which, like all other evils that are personal to himself, he is to brave, in that calm and temperate course of public virtue, in which he feels himself called to move. He loves, indeed, the esteem of mankind much, but there is something which he loves still more; and he will not suffer the world to be miserable, that he may run a little less risk of being counted a hypocrite.

I now, then, conclude the remarks which I had to offer on all the duties which we owe to others; whether they relate to mere abstinence from injury, or to positive beneficence; and whether they relate to all the individuals of mankind, or merely to a limited number of them that are connected with us by peculiar ties.

I have treated, as you must have perceived, of our moral duties, with only few remarks on what are commonly denominated rights; for this best of reasons, that the terms right and duty are, in the strictest sense, in morality at least, corresponding and commensurable. Whatever service it is my duty to do to any one, he has a moral right to receive from me: there is one moral emotion, one simple feeling of approvableness which constitutes to our heart,

in the consideration of any action, the right or the duty, according as we view the agent, or him to whom his action relates. I do not speak at present, it is to be remembered, of the additional force of law as applied to particular moral duties, a force which it may be expedient variously to extend or limit, but of the moral duties alone; and in these, alike in every case, the moral duty implies a moral right, and the moral right a moral duty. When I say that it is my duty to perform a certain action, I mean nothing more than that if I do not perform it, I shall regard myself, and others will regard me, with moral disapprobation. When I say that any one has a moral right to my performance of a certain action, do I mean any thing more than was said by me, in the former case? or rather, do I not simply mean still, that if I do not perform the action, the feeling of moral disapprobation will arise in myself and others?

The laws, indeed, have made a distinction of our duties, enforcing the performance of some of them, and not enforcing the performance of others; but this partial interference of law, useful as it is in the highest degree to the happiness of the world, does not alter the nature of the duties themselves, which, as resulting from the moral nature of man, preceded every legal institution.

The facility of determining certain duties in all their circumstances, and the impossibility of determining others which vary with circumstances that cannot be made the subjects of judicial inquiry, and into which, for the general tranquillity of a state, it would not be expedient to make a nice inquiry, even though they could be made subjects of it, have been, of course, the great reason for which certain duties only are enforced by law, and others left to the morality of individuals themselves. It is easy, at least in most cases, and in all cases comparatively easy, to ascertain the obligation to the duties ranked together under the name justice, — the duties of abstaining from positive injury of

every sort, and of fulfilling precise conventional engagements. It would not be easy to ascertain, in like manner, what number of injuries, on the part of a benefactor, lessened, and perhaps destroyed altogether, the obligation to a grateful return of services for some early benefit received ; and an inquiry into such circumstances, as it might extend to many of the most delicate and confidential transactions of a long life, would, as inquisitorial, be productive of more evil, than it could be productive of good, as judicial. Gratitude, therefore, is left, and wisely left, to the free moral sentiments of mankind : justice is enforced by the united power of the state.

On this very simple distinction of duties which the law enforces, and of those which, for obvious reasons, it does not attempt to enforce, and on this alone, as I conceive, is founded the division of perfect and imperfect rights, which is so favourite a division with writers in jurisprudence, and with those ethical writers whose systems, from the prevailing studies and habits of the time, were in a great measure vitiated by the technicalities of law. The very use of these terms, however, has unfortunately led to the belief, that in the rights themselves, as moral rights, there is a greater or less degree of perfection or moral incumbency, when it is evident that morally there is no such distinction ; or, I may say even, that if there were any such distinction, the rights which are legally perfect would be often of less powerful moral force than rights which are legally said to be imperfect. There is no one, I conceive, who would not feel more remorse, a deeper sense of moral impropriety, in having suffered his benefactor, to whom he owed all his affluence, to perish in a prison for some petty debt, than if he had failed in the exact performance of some trifling conditions of a contract, in the terms which he knew well that the law would hold to be definite and of perfect obligation.

It is highly important, therefore, for your clear views in ethics, that you should see distinctly the nature of this dif-

ference, to which you must meet with innumerable allusions, and allusions that involve an obscurity which could not have been felt, but for the unfortunate ambiguity of the phrases employed to distinguish rights that are easily determinable by law, and therefore enforced by it, from rights which are founded on circumstances less easily determinable, and therefore not attempted to be enforced by legal authority.

It is, as I have said, on the one simple feeling of moral approvableness, that every duty, and therefore every right, is founded. All rights are morally perfect ; because, wherever there is a moral duty to another living being, there is a moral right in that other ; and where there is no duty there is no right. There is as little an imperfect right in any moral sense, as there is in logic an imperfect truth or falsehood.

Actions of which the right is clearly determinable in all its circumstances, or may be imagined at least to be clearly determinable, the law takes under its cognizance. But, into the greater number of our virtues or vices, it makes no judicial inquiry. And though it might seem, on first reflection, to be more advantageous, if all which is morally due to us, might have been judicially claimed, it is well that so many virtues are left at our own disposal. But for this freedom from legal compulsion, there could be no virtue, at least no virtue which could to others be a source of delight, however gratifying the conscious disinterestedness might be to the breast of the individual. What pleasure could we derive from the ready services of affection, if the failure of one of them would have subjected the delinquent to personal punishment ; if we could not distinguish, therefore, the kindness of the heart, from the selfish semblance of it which it was prudence to assume, and if the delightful society under the domestic roof had thus been converted into a college of students of domestic law, calculating smiles and proportioning every tone of tenderness to the strict requisitions of the statute-book ?

LECTURE XX.

OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE DEITY.

MY last Lecture brought to a conclusion my remarks on the various moral relations which connect every individual of mankind with every other individual, some by ties of peculiar interest, but all by the obligation of benevolent wishes and of benevolent efforts, when it is in our power to free even a stranger from suffering, or to afford him any gratification which he could not have enjoyed but for us.

The ethical inquiries which have of late engaged us, may be considered, then, as developments of one great truth, which it is impossible for man to consider too often ; that he does not enter life to be an idle spectator of the magnificence of the universe, and of the living beings like himself that dwell with him on that globe which is his temporary home, but that he has duties to perform as well as pleasures to enjoy and pains to avoid ; that he has it in his power to relieve the sufferings of others and to augment their happiness, and that, having this power, he must be an object of approbation to himself, if he use it for those noble purposes, or of disapprobation to himself, if he neglect to use it ; still more, if, instead of merely neglecting the happiness of others, he exert himself, intentionally, to lessen it, and add to the sufferings that exist in the world, independently of him, the sufferings which it is in his power to inflict on others, and the more dreadful sufferings of remorse and despair that must be felt by his own guilty heart.

I should now, in regular order, proceed to the consideration of that propriety of conduct, with respect to the individual, which constitutes what has been termed our duty to ourselves. But, as this inquiry involves chiefly

the consideration of happiness, and as so much of human happiness has relation to our notions of the Divinity and our prospects of immortal life, it seems to me better, upon the whole, to deviate in a slight degree from our regular plan, and to give our attention first to those great subjects, before entering on the inquiry which must have relation to them.

We have already considered man in various aspects ; as a sensitive being, capable of being affected by the things around him, and deriving from them not pleasure, and pain, and sustenance, merely, but the elements of his knowledge ; as an intellectual being, capable of discovering the relations of things, comparing, generalizing, forming systems of truth, and almost creating worlds of fiction that arise with the semblance of truth at the mere will of his fancy ; and, lastly, as a moral agent, connected with other moral agents, by ties that are innumerable as the living objects to whom they relate. We have now to consider the more important relation, which, as a created and dependent, but immortal being, he bears to that supreme being, who is the great source of all existence.

On this subject, that comprehends the sublimest of all the truths which man is permitted to attain, the benefit of revelation may be conceived to render every inquiry superfluous, which does not flow from it. But to those who are blessed with a clearer illumination, it cannot be uninteresting to trace the fainter lights, which in the darkness of so many gloomy ages, amid the oppression of tyranny in various forms, and of superstition more afflicting than tyranny itself, could preserve, still dimly visible to man, that virtue which he was to love, and that Creator whom he was to adore. Nor can it be without profit, even to their better faith, to find all nature thus concurring, as to its most important truths, with revelation itself ; and every thing living and inanimate announcing that high and holy one, of whose perfections they have been privileged with a more splendid manifestation.

We have to consider, then, not the tie which connects man with his parents only, and with that race of mortal ancestors by whom a frail existence has been successively transmitted from those who lived for a few feeble years, to those who lived afterwards for a few feeble years, but that far nobler principle of union, by which he is connected with him who has existed for ever, the Creator of the universe, and the Preserver of that universe which he has created. The inquiry into the existence of the noblest of beings, into the existence of him to whom we look as the source of every thing which we enjoy and admire, is itself surely the noblest of all the inquiries on which man can enter; and the feelings with which we enter on it should be of a kind that is suitable to the contemplation of a nature so noble, even as possibly existing. “*Si intramus templa compositi,*” says an eloquent pagan writer, when beginning an inquiry into some of the mere works of God, “*si ad sacrificium accessuri vultum submittimus, si in omne argumentum modestiae fingimur; quanto hoc magis facere debemus, cum de sideribus, de stellis, de deorum natura disputamus, ne quid temere, ne quid impudenter, aut ignorantes affirmemus, aut scientes mentiamur.*”¹

The universe exhibits indisputable marks of design, and is therefore not self-existing, but the work of a designing mind. There exists, then, a great designing mind. Such is the first truth with respect to the indication of divinity in the universe, to which I would direct your attention.

If the world had been without any of its present adaptation of parts to parts, only a mass of matter, irregular in form, and quiescent, — and if we could conceive ourselves, with all our faculties as vigorous as now, contemplating such an irregular and quiescent mass, without any thought of the order displayed in our own mental frame, I am far from contending that, in such circumstances, with nothing

¹ Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones*, lib. vii. cap. xxx.

before us that could be considered as indicative of a particular design, we should have been led to the conception of a Creator. On the contrary, I conceive the abstract arguments which have been adduced to show that it is impossible for matter to have existed from eternity, by reasonings on what has been termed necessary existence, and the incompatibility of this necessary existence with the qualities of matter, to be relics of the mere verbal logic of the schools, as little capable of producing conviction as any of the wildest and most absurd of the technical scholastic reasonings on the properties or supposed properties of entity and non-entity. Eternal existence, the existence of that which never had a beginning, must always be beyond our distinct comprehension, whatever the eternal object may be, material or mental ; and as much beyond our comprehension in the one case as in the other, though it is impossible for us to doubt that some being, material or mental, must have been eternal, if any thing exists.

Had there e'er been nought, nought still had been ;
Eternal these must be.¹

In the circumstances supposed, however, it is very probable that if we formed any thought at all upon the subject, we should have conceived the rude quiescent mass to have been itself eternal, as, indeed, seems to have been the universal opinion of the ancient philosophers with respect to the matter of the universe, even though they admitted the existence of divine beings as authors of that beautiful regularity which we perceive. The mass alone would have been visible, — creation, as a fact, unknown to our experience, — and in the mass itself, nothing which could be regarded as exhibiting traces of an operating mind.

But though matter, as an unformed mass, existing without relation of parts, would not, I conceive, of itself have suggested the notion of a Creator, — since in every hypo-

¹ Night Thoughts, Night ix.

thesis, something material or mental must have existed uncaused, and mere existence, therefore, is not necessarily a mark of previous causation, unless we take for granted an infinite series of causes, — it is very different when the mass of matter is considered as possessing proportions and obvious relations of parts to each other, relations which do not exist merely in separate pairs, but many of which concur in one more general relation, and many of these again, in relations more general still. In short, when the whole universe seems to present to us, on whatever part of it we may look, exactly the same appearances as it would have presented if its parts had been arranged intentionally for the purpose of producing the results which are now perceived, — when these appearances of adaptation are not in a few objects out of many, but in every thing that meets our view, and innumerable, therefore, as the innumerable objects that constitute to us the universe, we feel an absolute impossibility of supposing that so many appearances of design exist without design ; an impossibility against which it may not be difficult to adduce words in the form of argument, but which it would be as difficult to endeavour not to feel, as to divest ourselves of that very capacity of reasoning to which the negative argument must be addressed. It would be absurd to attempt to state how many proportions may co-exist, and yet be imagined by us not to imply necessarily any design in the production of them. A few types, for example, may be thrown loosely together, and some of them may form a word. This we can believe, without any suspicion of contrivance. If many such words, however, were to be thrown together, we should suspect contrivance, and would believe contrivance, with the most undoubting conviction, if a multitude of types were to be found, thus forming one regular and continued poem. This instance, I may remark by the way, is one which is used by Cicero ; though it is one which we should little have expected to find in an ancient writer, in ages when the

blessing of the art of printing was unknown. In speaking of the opinion of those who contend that the universe was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, he says, "*Hoc qui existimat fieri potuisse, non intelligo, cur non idem putet, si innumerabiles unius et viginti formae literarum, vel aureae vel qualeslibet, aliquò conjiciantur, posse ex his in terram excussis, annales Ennii ut deinceps legi possent effici; quod nescio, an, ne in uno quidem versu, possit tantum valere fortuna.*"¹

Such is our nature, then, that it would seem as truly impossible that a number of types thrown together should form the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, as that they should form *Homer* himself. We might assert, indeed, that it was by chance that each type had found its way into its proper place; but, in asserting this, our understanding would belie our sceptical assertion. A certain continued series of relations is believed by us to imply contrivance, as truly as the sensations produced in us are conceived to imply the existence of corresponding sensible qualities in the objects without; or as any conclusion in reasoning itself is felt to be virtually contained in the premises which evolve it. The great question is, whether, in the universe, there be any such continued series of relations?

Strange as it may seem, that, by knowing more and more fully all the uses which the different parts of the universe fulfil, we should be less disposed to think of the contrivance which those concurring uses indicate, the fact is certain. As often as we do think of them, indeed, in relation to their origin, and say within ourselves, is this admirable seeming arrangement fortuitous or the work of design? we feel more profoundly, that there must have been contrivance, in proportion as we have discovered more traces of harmony in the disposition of the parts subservient to certain uses. But still we think of these less frequently,

¹ *De Natura Deorum*, lib. ii. p. 509. Ernest. Lond. 1819.

merely because they have often been before us. We have all some particular objects on which we are intent—of pleasure, or business, or what at least we take to be business. It requires some astonishment, therefore, to make us pause and suspend our thoughts, which we have already given to some other object ; and astonishment requires that the object which excites it should be new. If it had been possible for the generations of mankind to have existed in society in a world of darkness, and that splendid luminary, by the regular appearances of which we now date our existence, had suddenly arisen on the earth, how immediately would it have suspended every project and passion, all those projects, and passions, and frivolities, which fill our hearts at present with their own petty objects, so as scarcely to leave room for a single better thought ! The gayest trifle would, for an instant, have ceased to be a trifle. The most ambitious courtly sycophant, who had been creeping for years round the throne, labouring to supplant rivals whom he never had seen, with the same assiduity as that with which competitors for royal favour, in a world of sunshine, labour to supplant rivals whom they have seen, would have thought of something more than of himself and them at such a moment. The very atheists of such a world, whose chief amusement, in their blindness, had been the ingenuity of proving that the world must have existed for ever, as it existed then, would almost have felt, on such an appearance, that there is a power which can create, and would have been believers in that power, for some moments at least, though they might have hastened, as soon as their superstitious fear permitted them, to accommodate the new phenomenon to their system. The sudden appearance, then, of the sun, as it rose in all its magnificence, on beings who had never before enjoyed a single ray of its profusion of splendour, would have led every heart to think of some mighty Power that had formed it. It would have produced that great effect which Lucretius and Petronius,

taking a casual concomitant for the cause, very falsely ascribe to fear, but which is, in truth, the effect of that admiration of the great and new, which may be combined with fear, though not necessarily, as it may be combined with feelings of a very different kind.

Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor ; ardua coelo
Fulmina quum caderent, discussaque moenia flammis,
Atque ictus flagraret Athos.

Fear of supernatural power, in such a case, it is very evident, must be the effect of previous belief of the existence of that Power which is feared, for no one can fear that which he does not conceive to exist. It was not the fear, therefore, but the previous admiration of the new phenomenon, which, in Petronius's sense, "made the Gods ;" and, but for this admiration of what was new and great, the fear of the thunderbolt could as little have produced fear of a Divine Being, before unknown and unsuspected, as the fear of being burnt to death when our house was on fire, could, of itself, have suggested the notion of a Divinity.

The sudden appearance of the sun, then, in a case like that which I have supposed, would have led every mind to some thought as to its origin. It would have indicated power of some sort. But the sun would have gone down ; and, though there might be some little hope that what had once appeared might reappear, it could have been only a slight hope. The night once passed, however, it would return in its former magnificence ; and, after a few successions of days and nights, its regularity would add to the previous conception of power, some conception of corresponding order in the power, whatever it might be, which sent it forth with so much regularity. Such would have been our feelings, if we had not known the sun ever since we remember existence. Its rising and setting are now, as it were, a part of our own life. We arrange the labours of the day, so as to bring them to a conclusion before the

darkness with which evening is to close ; and we lie down at night full of projects for the morning, with perfect reliance that the light which guided us during the past day, will guide us equally in that which is soon to shine upon us. Yet this very circumstance,—the regularity with which the sun has appeared to distribute to us its innumerable blessings, a regularity which gives to the splendid phenomenon itself more indubitable marks of the power which is its source,—is the circumstance that prevents us from thinking of this divine source. “*Sed assiduitate quotidiana,*” says Cicero, “*et consuetudine oculorum, assuescunt animi, neque admirantur, neque requirunt rationes earum rerum, quas semper vident ; proinde quasi novitas nos magis quam magnitudo rerum, debeat ad exquirendas causas excitare.*”¹

Even if, when we first beheld the wonderful appearances of nature, our faculties had been such as they are when matured in after life, though the phenomenon must, of course, have become equally familiar to us, we should still have retained some impression of those feelings which the aspect of the universe must have excited in us when we first entered into this world of glory. “The miracles of nature,” says Diderot, “are exposed to our eyes, long before we have reason enough to derive any light from them. If we entered the world with the same reason which we carry with us to an opera, the first time that we enter a theatre,—and if the curtain of the universe, if I may so term it, were to be rapidly drawn up, struck with the grandeur of every thing which we saw, and all the obvious contrivances exhibited, we should not be capable of refusing our homage to the Eternal power which had prepared for us such a spectacle. But who thinks of marveling at what he has seen for fifty years? What multitudes are there, who, wholly occupied with the care of obtaining

¹ *De Natura Deorum*, lib. ii. p. 510.

subsistence, have no time for speculation: the rise of the sun is only that which calls them to toil, and the finest night, in all its softness, is mute to them, or tells them only that it is the hour of repose.”¹

When we read, for the first time, the account which Adam gives to the angel of his feelings, when, with faculties such as we have supposed, and every thing new before him, he found himself in existence in that happy scene of Paradise which Milton has described, we are apt to think that the poet has represented him as beginning too soon to reason with respect to the power to which he must have owed his existence; and yet, if we deduct the influence of long familiarity, and suppose even a mind less vigorous than that of Adam, but with faculties such as exist now only in mature life, to be placed in the first moment of existence in such a scene, we shall find, the more we reflect on the situation, that the individual scarcely could fail to philosophize in the same manner.

As new waked from soundest sleep,
Soft on the flow'ry herb I found me laid,
In balmy sweat, which, with his beams the sun
Soon dried, and on the reeking moisture fed.
Straight toward heaven my wond'ring eyes I turn'd,
And gazed awhile the ample sky, till raised
By quick instinctive motion up I sprung,
As thitherward endeavouring, and upright
Stood on my feet. About me round I saw
Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains,
And liquid lapse of murmuring streams: by these
Creatures that lived and moved, or walk'd or flew,
Birds on the branches warbling: all things smiled;
With fragrance, and with joy my heart o'erflow'd.
Myself I then perused, and limb by limb
Survey'd, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran,
With supple joints, as lively vigour led:
But who I was, or whence, or from what cause,

¹ Œuvres de Diderot, tome i. p. 100. Amst. 1772, 12mo.

Knew not ; to speak I tried, and forthwith spake.
My tongue obey'd, and readily could name
Whate'er I saw. Thou sun, said I, fair light !
And thou, enlighten'd earth, so fresh and gay,
Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,
And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,
Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here ;
Not of myself ; by some great Maker then,
In goodness and in power pre-eminent ;
Tell me how may I know him, how adore,
From whom I have, that thus I move and live,
And feel that I am happier than I know.¹

Refined as this reasoning may seem in such circumstances of new existence, it seems to us refined only because, on imagining the situation of our first parent, it is difficult for us to divest ourselves of long-accustomed feelings, and to suppose in his vigorous mind the full influence of that primary vivid admiration which we have never felt, because our minds had become accustomed to the sublime magnificence of the world before they were capable of feeling the delightful wonder which, if it had been felt by us as he who is so poetically described must have felt it, would have led us too to reason in the same manner, and to feel perhaps that instant gratitude to which his tongue was so ready to give utterance.

All the impression, then, which the wonders of nature would produce upon us, as new, is of course lost to us now. What would have forced itself upon us, without reflection, requires now an effort of reflection. But, when we make the reflection, the contrivance does not appear to us less irresistibly marked. We have, indeed, many more proofs of such contrivance, than we could possibly have had, but for that experience which has been adding to them every day.

If a multitude of parts, all manifestly relating to each

¹ Paradise Lost, book viii. 253-282.

other, and producing a result which itself has as manifest a relation to the results of other proportions, cannot be observed by us without an irresistible impression of design ; if it is impossible for us to conceive that nine millions of alphabetic characters could fall of themselves into a treatise or a poem ; that all the pictures, I will not say in the whole world, but even the few which are to be found in a single gallery, were the product of a number of colours thrown at random from a brush upon canvass ; that a city, with all its distinct houses, and all the distinct apartments in those houses, and all the implements of domestic use which those apartments contain, could not have existed without some designing mind, and some hands that fashioned the stone and the wood, and performed all the other operations necessary for erecting and adorning the different edifices ; if it be easier for us to believe that our senses deceived us in exhibiting to us such a city, and that there was truly nothing seen by us, than to believe that the houses existed of themselves without any contrivance ; the only question, as I have already said, is, whether the universe itself exhibits such combinations of parts relating to each other, as the poem, the picture, the city, or any other object for which we find it necessary to have recourse to designing skill. It is quite evident that, in such a case as this, all abstract reasoning is superfluous. We have not to investigate the relation which harmony of parts bears to design, or to enter into nice disquisitions on the theory of probabilities. We are addressing men, and we address, therefore, beings to whom doubt of such a relation is impossible, who require no abstract reasoning to be convinced that the *Iliad* of Homer, or Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*, could not be formed by any loose and casual apposition of alphabetic characters after characters, and who, for the same reason, must believe that any similar order implies similar design. If this connexion of a regular series of relations with some regulating mind, is not felt, there is at

least as much reason to suspect that any abstract reasoning on probabilities will be as little felt, since every reasoning must assume a principle itself unproved, and as little universal as such belief in such circumstances. Still more superfluous must be all those reasonings with respect to the existence of the Deity, from the nature of certain conceptions of our mind, independent of the phenomena of design, which are commonly termed reasonings *a priori*,—reasonings that, if strictly analyzed, are found to proceed on some assumption of the very truth for which they contend, and that, instead of throwing additional light on the argument for a Creator of the universe, have served only to throw on it a sort of darkness, by leading us to conceive that there must be some obscurity in truths which could give occasion to reasoning so obscure. God, and the world which he has formed—these are our great objects. Every thing which we strive to place between these is nothing. We see the universe, and, seeing it, we believe in its Maker. It is the universe, therefore, which is our argument, and our only argument; and, as it is powerful to convince us, God is, or is not, an object of our belief.

If proportion, order, subserviency to certain uses that are themselves subservient to other uses, and these to others, in a regular series, be then what it is impossible for us to consider, without the belief of design, what is the universe but a spectacle of such relations in every part? From the great masses that roll through space, to the slightest atom that forms one of their imperceptible elements, every thing is conspiring for some purpose. I shall not speak of the relations of the planetary motions to each other; of the mutual relations of the various parts of our globe; of the different animals of the different elements, in the conformity of their structure to the qualities of the elements which they inhabit; of man himself, in all the nice adaptations of his organs, for purposes which the anatomist and physiologist may explain to us in more learned language, but which

even the vulgar, who know only the thousandth part, or far less than the thousandth part, of the wonders of their own frame, yet see sufficiently, to be convinced of an arrangement which the physiologist sees more fully, but does not believe more undoubtingly. To these splendid proofs, it is scarcely necessary to do more than to allude. But, when we think of the feeblest and most insignificant of living things—the minutest insect, which it requires a microscope to discover; when we think of it, as a creature, having limbs that move it from place to place, nourished by little vessels, that bear to every fibre of its frame some portion of the food which other organs have rendered fit for serving the purposes of nutrition, — having senses, as quick to discern the objects that bear to it any relative magnitude, as ours, and not merely existing as a living piece of most beautiful mechanism, but having the power which no mere mechanism, however beautiful, ever had, of multiplying its own existence, by the production of living machines exactly resembling itself, in all the beautiful organic relations that are clustered as it were in its little frame; when we think of all the proofs of contrivance which are thus to be found in what seems to us a single atom, or less than a single atom, and when we think of the myriads of myriads of such atoms which inhabit even the smallest portion of that earth which is itself but an almost invisible atom, compared with the great system of the heavens, what a combination of simplicity and grandeur do we perceive! It is one universal design, or an infinity of designs: nothing seems to us little, because nothing is so little as not to proclaim that Omnipotence which made it; and I may say, too, that nothing seems to us great in itself, because its very grandeur speaks to us of that immensity before which all created greatness is scarcely to be perceived.

On particular arguments of this kind, that are as innumerable as the things which exist, I feel that it is quite idle to dwell. Those whom a single organized being, or

even a single organ, such as the eye, the ear, the hand, does not convince of the being of a God,—who do not see him, not more in the social order of human society, than in a single instinct of animals, producing unconsciously a result that is necessary for their continued existence, and yet a result which they cannot have foreknown,—will not see him in all the innumerable instances that might be crowded together by philosophers and theologians. If, then, such be our nature, that regularity of parts, subservient to certain uses, impresses us necessarily with a feeling of previous contrivance, we speak against the conviction of our own heart as often as we affect to shelter ourselves in the use of a frivolous word, and say, of all the contrivance of the universe, that it is only the result of chance,—of chance to which it would seem to us absurd to ascribe the far humbler traces of intellect that are to be found in a poem, or a treatise of philosophy. What should we think of any one who should ascribe to chance the combinations of letters that form the Principia of Newton ! and is the world which Newton described less gloriously indicative of wisdom than the mere description ? The word chance, in such a case, may be regarded as expressive only of unwilling assent. It is a word easily pronounced, but it is nothing more.

“How long,” says Tillotson, in one of his Sermons, “might twenty thousand blind men, which should be sent out from the several remote parts of England, wander up and down before they would all meet upon Salisbury Plains, and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an army ? And yet this is much more easy to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of matter should rendezvous themselves into a world. A man that sees Henry the Seventh’s chapel at Westminster, might, with as good reason, maintain, (yea, with much better, considering the vast difference betwixt that little structure and the huge fabric of the world,) that it was never contrived or built by any man, but that the stones did by chance grow into

those curious figures into which they seem to have been cut and graven ; and that upon a time (as tales usually begin) the materials of that building, the stone, mortar, timber, iron, lead, and glass, happily met together, and very fortunately ranged themselves into that delicate order in which we see them now so close compacted, that it must be a very great chance that parts them again. What would the world think of a man that should advance such an opinion as this, and write a book for it ? If they would do him right, they ought to look upon him as mad ; but yet with a little more reason than any man can have to say that the world was made by chance.”¹

The world, then, was made ; there is a designing Power which formed it,—a Power whose own admirable nature explains whatever is admirable on earth, and leaves to us, instead of the wonder of ignorance, that wonder of knowledge and veneration which is not astonishment, but love and awe.

“The impious,” says an eloquent French writer, “are struck with the glory of princes and conquerors that found the little empires of this earth ; and they do not feel the omnipotence of that hand which laid the foundations of the universe. They admire the skill and the industry of workmen, who erect those palaces which a storm may throw down ; and they will not acknowledge wisdom, in the arrangements of that infinitely more superb work which the revolutions of ages have respected, and must continue to respect till he who made it shall will it to pass away. In vain, however, do they boast that they do not see God ; it is because they seek him, who is perfect holiness, in a heart that is depraved by its passions. But they have only to look out of themselves, and they will find him every where : the whole earth will announce to them its maker ; and if they refuse still their assent, their own corrupted

¹ Tillotson's Works, vol. i. sermon i. p. 12. Lond. 1752, folio.

heart will be the only thing in the universe which does not proclaim the author of its being.”¹

So completely do we feel this universal assent of nature, in acknowledging the existence of its author, that we enter readily into those poetic personifications which animate every object, and call on them to mingle as it were in worship with mankind.

To Him, ye vocal gales,
Breathe soft, whose spirit in your freshness breathes !
O talk of Him in solitary glooms,
Where, o'er the rock, the scarcely waving pine
Fills the brown shade with a religious awe.
And ye, whose bolder note is heard afar,
Who shake the astonish'd world, lift high to Heaven
The impetuous song, and say, from whom you rage.
His praise, ye brooks, attune, ye trembling rills,
And let me catch it, as I muse along.
Ye headlong torrents, rapid and profound;
Ye softer floods, that lead the humid maze
Along the vale; and thou, majestic main,
A secret world of wonders in thyself,
Sound His stupendous praise, whose greater voice
Or bids you roar, or bids your roarings fall.²

To that power which we thus call on them to attest, they all truly bear witness. We assign to them feelings which they have not, indeed, as much as we assign to them a voice which they have not; but, so strong is the evidence of mind which they bear, that it seems as if we merely give them a voice expressing, in our language, what they mutely feel.

¹ Massillon.

² Thomson, Hymn on the Seasons.

LECTURE XXI.

OF THE EXISTENCE — THE UNITY — THE OMNISCIENCE — THE OMNIPOTENCE — AND THE GOODNESS OF THE DEITY.

MY last Lecture was employed in considering the evidence which the frame of nature exhibits, of the being of its divine Author.

Of this there appears to me to be only one argument which can produce conviction, but that an argument so irresistible, as to correspond, in its influence on the mind, with the power of him whose existence it forces even the most reluctant to acknowledge. The arguments commonly termed metaphysical, on this subject, I have always regarded as absolutely void of force, unless in as far as they proceed on a tacit assumption of the physical argument; and, indeed, it seems to me no small corroborative proof of the force of this physical argument, that its remaining impression on our mind has been sufficient to save us from any doubt as to that existence, which the obscure and laborious reasonings *a priori*, in support of it, would have led us to doubt rather than to believe.

The universe is that which shows the existence of the Author of the universe. It exhibits a harmony of relations, to perceive which is to perceive design; that is to say, it is impossible for us to perceive them without feeling immediately, that the harmony of parts with parts, and of their results with each other, must have had its origin in some designing mind. I did not conceive it necessary to occupy much of your time in tracing the various relations of this sort which the universe presents, in the small as in the great, in the simple as in the complicated, for there is no need to exhibit a multitude of contrivances to prove a con-

triver. "*Nec avis pennulam,*" says St. Austin, "*nec herbae flosculum, nec arboris folium, sine partium suarum convenientia reliquit.*" It is pleasing, indeed, to trace, in every part of the creation, the wisdom by which it was created, as often as any new proof of beneficent intention is discovered by us, in some part, of which the uses were before unknown; but it is pleasing, only from the accession which is thus made to our physical knowledge, and from the interest which we feel in contemplating the works of a Power which we love, not from any stronger faith which we thence derive in the existence of that Power. He who can examine anatomically, I will not say the whole frame of a single organized being, but even a single organ, and not perceive design,—who can look, for example, at the different parts of the eye, and believe that they exist as they are, without any adaptation to the light which they refract, and to the sentient mind; who can see the bony socket which defends so precious an organ from external violence, the flexible covering in the lid, which can be raised or depressed at pleasure, that preserves it from injuries of a different kind; the apparatus for preparing a due quantity of moisture to lubricate the ball, and the conduit for carrying away all superfluous moisture; the muscles that enable us to vary at pleasure the field of our vision, by giving ready motion to the visual orb; and the soft cushion on which it rests, that these motions, however swift, may be performed without injury,—who, after observing these various provisions, that are merely external to it, considers what it is which is to be found within the little orb itself, the wonderful apparatus by which the rays of light from a wide field, that comprehends in it objects at many distances, are all made to converge, so as to form one distinct image on the small expansion of the optic nerve; and the apparatus, as wonderful, by which the quantity of light admitted or excluded is tempered to the delicate sensibility of the nerve, and this, not tardily at our bidding, since the injury

might then be done before we were able to know the danger, but instantly, without our volition, and even without our knowledge that any such process is taking place, — he who can consider the small compass within which so many wonders are condensed, and ascribe to chance, what, if invented by a human being, he could not fail to regard as the noblest instrument which wisdom, in all its ingenuity, had ever invented, may indeed be an atheist; but such an atheist would continue an atheist, though the whole wonders of the living and inanimate universe were exhibited in succession to his view.

To such a being, if such a denier of the slightest intentional adaptation of parts to parts in the frame of the universe were truly to exist, it would, indeed, be as difficult to prove the existence of God, as to prove the truths that are evolved from any process of arithmetical or geometrical reasoning, to one who denied in words the elementary relations which the separate propositions of the reasoning involve; but we do not rely the less on those truths of demonstration, on account of the mere verbal sophistry which denies them, or professes to deny them; and, notwithstanding the similar profession of scepticism as to design, it is equally impossible for us to consider a single organ like the eye, without believing that there was some one by whom the beautiful apparatus was contrived. We cannot read a poem or a treatise, without believing that it is a work of human art; nor read the characters of divinity in the universe, without thinking of its divine Author.

The manifest order of the universe, in the relation of parts to parts, and of their joint results to other joint results of other parts, is a proof then of some designing power, from which all this magnificent order took its rise: and the great Being, to whom, in discovering design, we ascribe the designing power, is the Being whom we denominate God. The harmony which is the proof of design, is itself a proof of the relative unity of that design. This designing

power is one then, in the only sense in which we are entitled to speak either of divine unity or plurality, as indicated by the frame of nature before us ; for it is only from the phenomena of the universe that we are capable of inferring the existence of any higher being whatever ; and, therefore, as we have no traces of any other being than the universe, directly or indirectly, exhibits to us, the designing power is not to our reason more than one ; since in every thing which we behold, there is unity of that design, from which alone we have any reason to infer a designer. The laws of motion which prevail on our earth, prevail equally wherever we are capable of discovering motion. On our own earth, where our observation is so ample in the infinity of objects around us, there is no irregularity or opposition of contrivances, but all have proportions or analogies which mark them as the result of one harmonious design. There may be many spiritual beings of greater or less excellence, though there is no evidence of them in nature ; for where there is no evidence whatever, it is as absurd to deny absolutely as to affirm. But there is, as I have said, no evidence of any such beings ; and the designing power, then, as marked to us by all which we perceive in nature, is one, in the only sense in which the unity of the Supreme Being can be demonstrable, or even at all conceivable by us. The power of which we speak, exists to our reason, only as the author of the design which we trace ; and the design which we trace, various as it may be in the parts to which it extends, is all one harmonious contrivance.

This designing unity, that is relative to what we see, is all, however, which we are logically entitled to infer from the phenomena ; for the absolute and necessary unity of the divine Power, as attempted to be proved by metaphysical arguments *a priori*, that are at best only a laborious trifling with words which either signify nothing or prove nothing, is more than, in our state of ignorance, independently of revelation, we are entitled to assert. The unity,

which alone, from the light of nature, we can with confidence assert, is hence not strictly exclusive, but wholly relative to that one design which we are capable of tracing in the frame of the universe.

This one designing Power, we are accustomed to say, is omniscient ; and, in the only sense in which that phrase can have any meaning, when used by creatures so ignorant as ourselves, to signify our impossibility of discovering any limits to the wisdom which formed the magnificent design of the world, the phrase may be used as expressive only of admiration that is justly due to wisdom so sublime. He who formed the universe, and adapted it, in all its parts, for those gracious purposes to which it is subservient, must of course have known the relations which he established ; and knowing every relation of every thing existing, he may truly be said to be omniscient in his relation to every thing which exists. But it is in this definite sense only that the phrase has any meaning, as used by creatures, whose knowledge is itself so very limited. Beyond this universe, it is presumptuous for man to venture, even in the homage which he offers. The absolute wisdom of the Deity, transcendent as it may be, when compared even with that noble display of it which is within us, and without us wherever we turn our eyes, we are incapable even of conceiving ; and admiring what we know, an awful veneration of what is unknown is all that remains for us. Our only meaning of the term Omniscience, then, does not arrogate to us any knowledge of those infinite relations which we assert the Deity to know : it is merely that the Supreme Being knows every relation of every existing thing, and that it is impossible for us to conceive any limit to his knowledge.

His omnipotence, in like manner, as conceived by us, whatever it may be in reality, is not a power extending to circumstances, of which, from our own ignorance, we must be incapable of forming a conception ; but a power which has produced whatever exists, and to which we cannot dis-

cover any limit. It may be capable of producing wonders, as far surpassing those which we perceive, as the whole fabric of the universe surpasses the little workmanship of mortal hands; but the relation of the Deity to these unexisting or unknown objects, is beyond the feebleness of our praise, as it is beyond the arrogance of our conception.

God, then, the author of the universe, exists. He exists, with a wisdom which could comprehend every thing that fills infinity in one great design; with a power which could fill infinity itself with the splendid wonders that are, wherever we endeavour to extend our search. We know no limit to his wisdom, for all the knowledge which we are capable of acquiring flows from him as from its source; we know nothing which can limit his power, for every thing of which we know the existence, is the work of his hand.

God, then, thus wise and powerful exists, and we are subject to his sway. We are subject to his sway; but, if all which we knew of his nature were his mere power and wisdom, the inquiry most interesting to us would still remain. The awful power, to which we perceive no limit, may be the sway of a tyrant, with greater means of tyranny than any earthly despot can possess; or it may be the sway of a father, who has more than parental fondness, and a power of blessing far more extensive than any parental power, which is but a shadow, and a faint shadow, of the divine goodness that has conferred it. If we were suddenly carried away into captivity, and sold as slaves, how eager should we be to discover whether our taskmaster were kind or cruel, whether we could venture to look to him with hope, or only with the terror which they feel, who are to see constantly above them a power which is to be exercised only in oppression, or whose kindness of a moment is the short interval of hours of tyranny! But I will not use such an illustration in speaking of God and

man. The paternal and filial relation is the only one which can be considered as faintly representing it; and to what son can it be indifferent whether his father be gentle or severe? The goodness of God is, of all subjects of inquiry, that which is most interesting to us. It is the goodness of him to whom we owe, not merely that we exist, but that we are happy or miserable now, and according to which we are to hope or fear for a future that is not limited to a few years, but extends through all the ages of immortality. Have we, then, reason to believe that God is good? that the designing power, which it is impossible for us not to perceive and admit, is a power of cruelty or kindness? Of whom is this the question? Of those whose whole life has been a continued display of the bountiful provision of Heaven, from the first moment at which life began.

It is the inquiry of those who, by the goodness of that God whose goodness they question, found, on their very entrance into this scene of life, sources of friendship already provided for them, merely because they had wants that already required friendship; whose first years were years of cheerfulness almost uninterrupted, as if existence were all that is necessary for happiness; to whom, in after-life, almost every exertion which they were capable of making was a pleasure, and almost every object which met their eye, a source of direct gratification, or of knowledge, which was itself delightful; who were not formed to be only thus selfishly happy, but seemed called, by some propitious voice of nature, to the diffusion of happiness, by the enjoyment which arose from that very diffusion, and warned from injuring others, by the pain which accompanied the very wish of doing evil, and the still greater pain of remorse, when evil had at any time been intentionally inflicted. Nor is it to be counted a slight part of the goodness of God, that he has given us that very goodness as an object of our thought, and has thus opened to us,

inexhaustibly, a pure and sublime pleasure in the contemplation of those divine qualities, which are themselves the source of all the pleasures that we feel.

Such is the goodness of God, in its relation to mankind, in infancy, in manhood, in every period of life. But we are not to think that the goodness of God extends only to man. The humblest life, which man despises, is not despised by him who made man of nothing, and all things of nothing, and "whose tender mercies are over all his works."

Has God, thou fool, work'd solely for thy good,
Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food ?
Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn,
For him as kindly spread the flow'ry lawn.
Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings ?
Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings.
Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat ?
Loves of his own and raptures swell the note.
The bounding steed you pompously bestride,
Shares with his lord the pleasure and the pride.
Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain ?
The birds of heaven shall vindicate their grain.¹

In vain do we strive to represent to ourselves all nature as our own, and only our own. The happiness which we see the other races around us enjoying, is a proof that it is theirs as well as ours; and that he, who has given us the dominion of all things that live on earth, has not forgotten the creatures which he has intrusted to our sway. Even in the deserts, in which our sway is not acknowledged — where the lion, if man approached, would see no lord before whom to tremble, but a creature far feebler than the ordinary victims of his hunger or his wrath, — in the dens and the wildernesses there are pleasures which owe nothing to us, but which are not the less felt by the fierce hearts that inhabit the dreadful recesses. They, too, have their happiness; because they too were created by a Power that

¹ Pope's Essay on Man, Ep. iii. 27-38.

is good, and of whose beneficent design, in forming the world, with all its myriads of myriads of varied races of inhabitants, the happiness of these was a part.

“Nor,” as it has been truly said, “is the design abortive. It is a happy world, after all. The air, the earth, the water, teem with delighted existence. In a spring noon, or a summer evening, on which ever side I turn my eyes, myriads of happy beings crowd upon my view. ‘The insect youth are on the wing.’ Swarms of new-born flies are trying their pinions in the air. Their sportive motions, their wanton mazes, their gratuitous activity, their continual change of place without use or purpose, testify their joy, and the exultation which they feel in their lately discovered faculties. A bee amongst the flowers in spring, is one of the most cheerful objects that can be looked upon. Its life appears to be all enjoyment; so busy and so pleased: yet it is only a specimen of insect life, with which, by reason of the animal being half-domesticated, we happen to be better acquainted than we are with that of others.”¹

Such is the seemingly happy existence of that minute species of life which is so abundant in every part of the great scene in which we dwell. I shall not attempt to trace the happiness upward, through all the alacrity and seeming delight in existence, of the larger animals, — an ever-flowing pleasure, of which those who have had the best opportunities of witnessing multitudes of gregarious animals feeding together, and rejoicing in their common pasture, will be the best able to appreciate the amount. All have means of enjoyment within themselves; and, if man be the happy sovereign of the creation, he is not the sovereign of miserable subjects.

Ask for what end the heavenly bodies shine,
Earth for whose use? Pride answers, 'tis for mine.

¹ Paley's Natural Theology, p. 392.

For me, kind Nature wakes her genial power,
Suckles each herb, and spreads out every flower ;
Annual for me, the grape, the rose, renew
The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew ;
For me, the mine a thousand treasures brings ;
For me, health gushes from a thousand springs ;
Seas roll to waft me, suns to light me rise :
My footstool earth, my canopy the skies.¹

All these sources of blessings, that are infinite as the living beings that enjoy them, were made, indeed, for man, whose pride makes the arrogant exclusive assumption ; but they were made also for innumerable beings, whose very existence is unknown to man, and who know not, in their turn, the existence of him who supposes that all these means of happiness are for himself alone. There is at every moment an amount of happiness on the earth, of which the happiness of all mankind is an element, indeed, but only one of many elements, that perhaps bears but a small proportion to the rest ; and it is not of this single element that we are to think, when we consider the benevolence of that God who has willed the whole.

It is this element of the universal happiness, however, with which we are best acquainted ; and when man is the inquirer, it is to this human part of course that we may suppose his attention to be chiefly turned. But man the enjoyer is very different from man the estimator of enjoyment. In making our estimate of happiness, we think only or chiefly of what is remarkable, not of what is ordinary ; as, in physics, we think of the rarer phenomena far more than of the appearances of nature which are every moment before our eyes. There are innumerable delights, therefore, of the senses, of the understanding, of the heart, which we forget, because they are delights to which we are every hour accustomed, and which are shared with us by all mankind, or the greater number of man-

¹ Essay on Man, Ep. i. 131-140.

kind. It is what distinguishes us from our fellows that we consider; and this, the very circumstance of distinction necessarily limits to a few; not what is common to us with our fellows, which, by the very wideness of the participation, is of an amount that is incomparably greater. We think of the benevolence of the Author of the whole race of mankind, therefore, as less than it is, because it is a benevolence that has provided for the whole race of mankind; and if the amount of good provided for every living being had been less in the extent of its diffusion, we should, in our erring estimate, have regarded it as more, at least if ourselves had been of the number of the privileged few, who alone enjoyed those general blessings of nature which now are common to all.

“Non dat Deus beneficia?—unde ergo ista quæ possides, quæ das, quæ negas, quæ servas, quæ rapis? unde hæc innumerabilia, oculos, aures, animum mulcentia? unde illa luxuriam quoque instruens copia? Neque enim necessitatibus tantummodo nostris provisum est: usque in delicias amamur. — Si pauca quis tibi donâset jugera, accepisse te diceres beneficium: immensa terrarum latè patentium spatia negas esse beneficium!”¹ It is truly, as this eloquent writer says, the possession of the common glories of the earth, the sky, of all nature, that is before us and above us, which is the most valuable possession of man; and the few acres which he enjoys, or thinks that he enjoys exclusively, compared with that greater gift of heaven to all mankind, are scarcely worthy of being counted as a proof of divine beneficence.

But though life to man, and to his fellow-inhabitants of earth, be a source of happiness upon the whole, it is not always, and in every instance, a source of happiness. There is not a moment, indeed, in which the quantity of agreeable sensation felt by myriads of creatures, may not

¹ Seneca de Beneficiis, lib. iv. cap. v. vi.

be far greater than all the pain which is felt at the same moment ; but still there is no moment in which pain, and a very considerable amount of pain, is not felt. Can he be good, then, under whose supreme government, and therefore almost, it may be said, at whose bidding, pain exists ? Before entering on this inquiry, however, it may be necessary to obviate an objection that arises from the mere limitation of our nature as finite beings.

Many of the complaints of those who are discontented with the system of the universe, arise from this mere limitation of our faculties and enjoyments ; a limitation in which ingratitude would find an argument, in whatever state of being short of absolute divinity it might be placed ; and even though possessing all the functions of divinity from the moment at which it was created, might still look back through eternity, and complain with the same reason, that it had not been created earlier to the exercise of such sublime functions.

It surely is not necessary, for the proof of benevolence on the part of the Divine Being, that man should be himself a god ; that he should be omniscient or omnipotent, any more than that he should have existed from eternity. His senses, with all his other faculties, are limited, because they are the faculties of a created being ; as even his immortality may, in one sense of the word, be said to be limited, when considered in relation to the eternity that preceded his existence. But how admirably does even the limitation of his nature demonstrate the gracious benevolence of Heaven, when we consider the innumerable relations of the universe that must have been contrived, in adaptation to the exact degree of his capacity, so as to be most productive of good in these particular circumstances. If we think only how very slight a change in the qualities of external things, though perfectly suitable, perhaps, to a different degree of sensitive and intellectual capacity, might have rendered the existence of man absolutely miserable,

how sublimely benevolent seems that wisdom, in the very minuteness of its care, which, by proportioning exactly the qualities of atoms to the qualities of that which, in the world of spirits, may be considered as scarcely more than what an atom is in the material world, has produced, amid so many possibilities of misery, this result of happiness.

You are probably all acquainted with the lines of Pope, so often quoted on this subject, that express briefly, and with great poetic force, the reasoning of Mr. Locke on this subject, which, perhaps, suggested them.

The bliss of man, could pride that blessing find,
Is, not to act or think beyond mankind ;
No powers of body or of soul to share,
But what his nature and his state can bear.
Why has not man a microscopic eye ?
For this plain reason, Man is not a fly.
Say, what the use, were finer optics given,
To inspect a mite, not comprehend the heaven
Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,
To smart and agonize at every pore ;
Or, quick effluvia darting through the brain,
Die of a rose, in aromatic pain ?
If nature thunder'd in his opening ears,
And stunn'd him with the music of the spheres,
How would he wish that heaven had left him still
The whispering zephyr and the purling rill !¹

We see, then, the advantage of the adaptation of our limited powers to the particular circumstances of nature.

But appearances of evil unquestionably exist, that are not to be ascribed to the mere limitation of our faculties, in relation to the finite system of things in which they are to be exercised. Let us now, then, proceed in part to the consideration of the question, as to the compatibility of these appearances with benevolence in the contriver of the universe.

¹ Essay on Man, Ep. i. 189-204.

The objection to the goodness of the Supreme Being, involved in this question, of course proceeds on the supposition that the Deity had the power of forming us differently; a power, therefore, which I need not stop to attempt to prove, since, unless this be taken for granted by the objector, the objection would be nugatory.

But if the Deity had the power of forming us differently—if, for example, he could have so constituted our nature, that every object amid which we were placed must have been a source of pain—that habit, instead of lessening the sense of pain, had continually increased it—that, instead of an almost constant tendency to hope, we had had an equally constant tendency to the most gloomy apprehension—that we had felt pleasure in inflicting pain gratuitously, and remorse only if we had inadvertently done good,—if all this had been, it would surely have been a conclusion as just as obvious, that the contriver of this system of misery was, in his own nature, malevolent; and any happiness which seemed slightly felt at times—especially if the happiness was the manifest result of a contrivance that, upon the whole, tended far more frequently to the production of pain—might, without any violation of the principles of sound philosophy, have been ascribed to an intention purely malevolent, as indicated by the general contrivance obviously adapted for the production of pain. If, in such a system of things, any one had contended for the benevolence of the Deity, from these few instances of pleasure, it would have been counted, as I cannot but think, a satisfactory answer, to have proved that the ordinary result of the contrivance must be pain; and to have pointed out the manifest subserviency of the different parts of the contrivance to this cruel purpose.

If this answer would be held valid, in the case now supposed, the opposite answer cannot be less valid, in the opposite circumstances in which we exist. I need not repeat, how much gratification we receive from the objects

around us, nor fill up that antithesis to the former statement, which would probably occur to yourselves, while I imagined and stated its various circumstances. I shall dwell only on the pain, that is the occasional result of the system of things as it is. Is this the result of a contrivance, of which pain seems to be the manifest object, or of a contrivance which is manifestly, in its general and obvious appearances, adapted for purposes of utility, and consequently of goodness? "Evil, no doubt, exists," says Paley, "but is never, that we can perceive, the object of contrivance. Teeth are contrived to eat, not to ache; their aching now and then is incidental to the contrivance, perhaps inseparable from it; or even, if you will, let it be called a defect in the contrivance; but it is not the object of it. This is a distinction which well deserves to be attended to. In describing implements of husbandry, you would hardly say of the sickle, that it was made to cut the reaper's hand; though, from the construction of the instrument, and the manner of using it, this mischief often follows. But, if you had occasion to describe instruments of torture, or execution, this engine, you would say, is to extend the sinews; this to dislocate the joints; this to break the bones; this to scorch the soles of the feet. Here pain and misery are the very objects of the contrivance. Now, nothing of this sort is to be found in the frame of nature. We never discover a train of contrivance to bring about an evil purpose. No anatomist ever observed a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease; or, in explaining the parts of the human body, ever said, this is to irritate, this to inflame, this duct is to convey the gravel to the kidneys, this gland to secrete the humour which forms the gout. If, by chance, he come to a part of which he knows not the use, the most he can say is, that it is useless; no one ever suspects that it is put there to incommode, to annoy, or to torment."¹

¹ Moral and Political Philosophy, book ii. chap. v.

When the direct object of all the great contrivances of nature, then, is so manifestly for beneficial purposes, it would be reasonable, even though no advantage could be traced as the consequence of the occasional evils of life, to ascribe these rather to purposes unknown to us, than to purposes that were malevolent. If the inhabitant of some other planet were to witness the kindness and solicitude of a father for his child in his long watchfulness of love, and were then to see the same parent force the child, notwithstanding its cries, to swallow some bitter potion, he would surely conclude, not that the father was cruel, but that the child was to derive benefit from the very potion which he loathed. What that benefit was, indeed, it would be impossible for him to conceive, but he would not conceive the less that the intention was benevolent. He would feel his own ignorance of the constitution of things on earth, and would be confident, that if he knew this constitution better, the seeming inconsistency of the affection, and the production of suffering, would be removed.

Such a presumption would be reasonable, even though we were incapable of discovering, in many cases, the advantage to which the seeming evil is subservient. It is very evident, that he only who knows all the relations of the parts of the universe, can justly appreciate the universe, and say with confidence of any part of it, It were better that this had not been. In our state of partial and very limited knowledge, if we say this of any part of the wonderful mechanism, we may perhaps say it of that which, not being, the happiness of millions would have been destroyed: we may say it even of that, the loss of which would be the confusion of all the systems of the universe.

Let earth unbalanced from her orbit fly,
Planets and suns run lawless through the sky ;
Let ruling angels from their spheres be hurled,
Being on being wreck'd, and world on world ;
Heaven's whole foundations to their centre nod,
And nature tremble to the throne of God.

All this dread order break, for whom ? for thee ?
Vile worm ! Oh ! madness, pride, impiety !¹

What should we think of him, who, fixing his whole attention on the dim figures in the background of a great picture, should say, that the artist had no excellence, because these figures had little resemblance to the clear outline of the men and horses that seemed intended to be represented by them ! All which would be necessary to vindicate the artist, would not be to make the slightest alteration in these figures, but to point out to the observer the foreground, and to bid him comprehend the whole picture in a glance. The universe is, if I may so express it, such a picture, but a picture far too large to be comprehended in our little gaze ; the parts which we see have always some relation to parts which we do not see ; and, if all these relations could be seen by us, there can be no doubt that the universe would then appear to us very different, as different, perhaps, as the picture seems to him who has looked only on the background, and who afterwards surveys the whole.

All reasoning of this kind, however, that is founded merely on our impossibility of accurate knowledge, is, I am aware, and am ready to admit, of little weight, unless where there is so decided a superiority of good or evil in the parts that may be conceived to be in a great measure known, as to leave no reasonable doubt as to the nature of the parts or relations of parts that are unknown. It is on this account, and on this account only, I consider it as of peculiar force in the present instance ; for I surely need not say, after the remarks already made, how strong are the appearances of benevolent intention in the system of the universe, in all those manifest contrivances, of which we are able clearly to discover the object.

The Divine Being who has contrived a system, that must thus, on every hypothesis, be allowed to be productive of

¹ Pope's Essay on Man, Ep. i. 251-258.

much good to man, must be benevolent, malevolent, or indifferent, or capriciously benevolent and malevolent. That he is not indifferent, every contrivance itself shows. That he is not capricious, is shown by the uniformity of all the laws of nature, since the world has been a subject of human observation. That he is not malevolent, the far greater proportion of the marks of benevolent intention sufficiently indicates; and since his benevolence, therefore, is not capricious, the only remaining supposition is, that it is the permanent character of the divine mind.

The presumption, then, as to the goodness of God, even in the apparent evils of the system in which man is placed, would be a reasonable presumption, though, with our limited comprehension, we were incapable of discovering the advantages that flow from these particular seeming evils. What we see clearly might be regarded as throwing light on other parts of the immense whole, which are too dim for our feeble vision.

When a fair estimate, then, has been made of all the indications of the moral character of its author, which the universe exhibits, it is logically wise to infer, in many cases, a goodness that is not immediately apparent in the particular results. But, feeble as our faculties are, they are not so weak of vision and comprehension as to be incapable of distinguishing many of the relations of apparent evil to real good. There are many evils, that is to say, qualities productive of uneasiness, which the ignorant, indeed, might wish removed, but which those who have a little more knowledge would wish to continue, though the continuance or the disappearance of them depended on their mere will; and every discovery of this sort which we make, adds new force to that general presumption of goodness, which, even though we had been incapable of making any such discovery, would have been justified by the general character of benevolent intention, in the obvious contrivances of the universe. In

treating of our appetites, I took occasion to explain to you the importance of the uneasy feelings which form a part of them. The ignorant, perhaps, might wish these removed, merely because they are uneasy feelings, though it is only as uneasy feelings they are valuable. The evils which we too might wish removed, are, perhaps, as important in their general relations, which we do not perceive, as hunger and thirst are in those relations, of which the vulgar do not think, and may almost be said, from their habits, to be incapable of thinking.

The analogy of many of the ills of life in their beneficial relation to our pains of appetite, is, indeed, very striking. Without the uneasiness of ungratified desire in general, how feeble, in many cases, would be the delight of the gratification itself! He, certainly, would not consult well for human happiness, by whom every human desire, if it were in his power, would be rooted from the breast.

It is in its relation to the enjoyments of conscious moral agency, however, that the existence of so much seeming evil in the world finds its best solution. To this I shall proceed in my next Lecture.

LECTURE XXII.

OF THE GOODNESS OF THE DEITY—OBJECTIONS OBIVIATED.

IN my last Lecture I considered the evidence which the universe exhibits of the goodness of its Author,—a goodness which, limited in its extent only by the limits of the universe itself, is present with us wherever we turn our eyes; since there is not a result of the wisdom and power of God which is not, in its consequences, direct or indirect,

an exhibition of some contrivance, for the moral or physical advantage of his creatures.

Though every thing which we behold, however, may, in its general relations, tend to this benevolent purpose, good, or at least what seems to be good, is far from being in every case the immediate result. There is misery in the world as truly as there is happiness in the world ; and he who denies the one, as a mere phenomenon of the living scene in which he is placed, might with as much reason deny the other. Whence, then, is this evil, has been the question of every age, that has been capable of inquiries beyond those which originate in mere animal necessity.

That Eternal Mind,
From passions, wants, and envy, far estranged,
Who built the spacious universe, and deck'd
Each part so richly with whate'er pertains
To life, to health, to pleasure,—why bade he
The viper Evil, creeping in, pollute
The goodly scene ; and, with insidious rage,
While the poor inmate looks around and smiles,
Dart her fell sting, with poison to his soul ?¹

Such has been the question of ages ; and if, for answer to it, in accordance with belief of the goodness of the Deity, it be necessary that the particular advantage of each particular seeming evil be precisely demonstrated, it must be confessed that no answer has yet been given to it by philosophy ; and that, in this sense, probably the question must continue unanswered, as long at least as man is a creature of this earth. To be able to answer it in this sense, indeed, would imply a knowledge of all the relations of all existing things, which is possible only to a being that can look upon the future still more clearly than man with his dim memory is permitted to look upon the past. But though we cannot state precisely a particular advan-

¹ Pleasures of Imagination, book iii.

tage of each seeming evil, we can at least infer, from the general appearances of nature, and the more minute and intimate contrivances which it exhibits, the moral character of that Power which has formed us ; so as to know of any particular contrivance, the particular effects of which we may be incapable of tracing, whether he who designed it as a part of a system was one who willed, or did not will, the happiness of mankind. We may infer it certainly with as great accuracy, or far greater, than that with which we infer the benevolent or malevolent disposition of our friends or foes ; and, if it be reasonable in the case of a friend, whose kindness has been the source of the chief happiness of our life, to infer, in some cases, in which we might have doubted of the intentions of others,—that his intentions might have been friendly to us, even when we suffer by the immediate results of his actions ; that confidence which we should blush not to feel in the case of an earthly friend, who, though known to us by long intimacy of mutual regard, may yet have been influenced by rivalries of interest or momentary passion, is surely not less reasonable, when he, in whom we confide, is the only friend that cannot have with us any rival interests,—a friend to whom we are indebted for every thing which we possess, even for the delights of those cordial intimacies, and for that very confidence which we think it the baseness of dishonour to withhold from any friend, but from that one who alone deserves it fully. It is surely not too much to claim for God, what, in the ordinary circumstances of society, we should regard as in some measure ignominious to deny to man ; or at least, if it seem too much for human gratitude to extend this trust to its first of benefactors, let us not have the selfish inconsistency of daring to claim from our own friends a confidence, which, in circumstances of far less equivocal obligation, we consider it only as wise and virtuous to deny to God.

That, in all the innumerable contrivances of nature, in

the wonderful mechanism of the living frame, there is not one of which the production of injury seems to have been the direct object, whatever occasional evil may indirectly arise from it; and that there are innumerable contrivances, of which the direct object is manifestly beneficial, may be regarded as a sufficient proof of the general disposition and gracious intention of him, to whose power and wisdom we ascribe these contrivances. In my last lecture, I endeavoured to picture to you a constitution of things, exactly the opposite of that which at present subsists; in which the evident direct object of every contrivance was the production of misery,—in which, in this misery, man, instead of the constant tendency to hope which now comforts him in affliction, had an equally constant tendency to despair, and become more keenly sensible to pain, the more he had been habituated to it; and as, in that case, where the direct object of every contrivance was manifestly injurious, no one would infer benevolence from any occasional tendency of the laws of that contrivance, to produce some slight gratification to the sufferer, when the incidental pleasure flowed from the same principle which produced the general anguish; so, in the present constitution of things, in which the direct object of every contrivance is beneficial to man, there is surely as little reason to infer any malevolent desire, from evils that arise in consequence of a general provision, which is, in all those general circumstances, to which it manifestly relates, decidedly productive of good.

The supreme orderer of the frame of nature, as I have said, is not capricious; for the laws which now regulate the universe, are the same which have been observed since man was an observer. He is not indifferent to the happiness or misery of man, for man exists as a being capable of happiness or misery; and every relation, or almost every relation, which connects man with the living or inanimate objects around him, is productive to him,

directly or indirectly, of some pleasure or pain. Equally evident is it, that He, whose general arrangements are all directly indicative of purposes of utility, that are only incidentally combined with any seeming evil, is not one who has willed, as the object of those arrangements, the misery of his living creatures; and if he be not malevolent, indifferent, nor capricious, he is and must be permanently benevolent, and the seeming evil has not been willed as evil. We are bound, therefore, not more by gratitude than by sound philosophy, to confide in the gracious intentions of Heaven, even when the graciousness of those intentions is to be determined, not by a particular result, that of itself, if it had existed alone, might not have seemed indicative of it, but by the general indications of moral character which the system, as a whole, exhibits.

An inference and extension of this kind, I have admitted, would not be reasonable, however, unless when the indications of gracious intention prevailed with indubitable superiority. But of this superiority, in the physical relations of things, who can doubt, who estimates the beneficent arrangements of the Author of the universe with half the candour with which he estimates the conduct and the character of a common earthly friend?

The operations of nature are not arbitrary, so as to vary with the particular circumstances of the individual and of the moment; and if it be of importance for man to be a designing agent, to have the noble consciousness of acting according to his own desire, and not to be the mere passive subject even of pleasure itself,—which he who can doubt is scarcely worthy of the name of man,—it is evidently of importance that the phenomena of nature should thus take place, according to general laws, that, by his foresight of their results, he may regulate his conduct in adaptation to them. The law, or regular arrangement of the sequences of events in nature, which produces good upon the whole, is not to be suspended, because it may, to an individual

in particular circumstances, be productive of evil ; since, if it were thus variable, no one could even guess what the result could be in any combination of circumstances ; and the evil which would arise from this uncertainty to the whole race of mankind, would unquestionably be far greater than the evil that might arise to a single individual, from the uniformity, in cases in which it might, to that particular individual, at that particular moment, have been profitable that the law were suspended.

Think we, like some weak prince, the Eternal Cause,
Prone for his fav'rites to reverse his laws ?
Shall burning *Ætna*, if a sage requires,
Forget to thunder and recall her fires ?
On air or sea, new motions be imprest,
O blameless *Bethel*, to relieve thy breast ?
When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation cease, if you go by ?¹

It is quite evident that even Omnipotence itself, which cannot do what is contradictory, cannot combine both advantages, — the advantage of regular order in the sequences of nature, and the advantage of an uniform adaptation of the particular circumstances of the moment, to the particular circumstances of the individual. We may take our choice, but we cannot think of a combination of both ; and if, as is very obvious, the greater advantage be that of uniformity of operation, we must not complain of evils to which that very uniformity, which we could not fail to prefer if the option had been allowed to us, has been the very circumstance that gave rise. You cannot fail to perceive of yourselves how much of that which we term evil is referable to this circumstance alone,—a circumstance which, in every instance, occasions to us momentary suffering indeed, but which, in every instance, leaves to us, or rather confers on us, the glorious privilege of conscious

¹ Essay on Man, Ep. iv. 121-128.

agency, of that agency with design, which implies a foreknowledge of certain events, as the consequents of certain other antecedent events. That the phenomena of nature should take place, then, according to general laws, and should not be various according to the particular circumstances of the individuals, to whom a temporary accommodation of them might seem more advantageous in some particular cases, is so obvious, if man is to be at all a reflecting and conscious agent, that I conceive it unnecessary to dwell at any length on the demonstration of it.

But general laws, it will be said, might have been framed, possessing all the advantages of regularity, and productive of less suffering. Is there any advantage, then, of suffering itself, that may reconcile it, more readily at least, with that divine goodness, the reality of which, as a quality of him to whose sway we are subject, it is so delightful to believe?

There are such relations of occasional suffering to lasting advantage, which, in many most important respects, could not exist but for the suffering, and for which all the suffering itself is not too dear a price.

The great advantage is to be found in the exercise of virtues, to which suffering, or the risk of suffering, is essential, and in all the enjoyment that flows from the consciousness of these virtues in ourselves, and from our admiration of them as displayed by others.

But, though this relation to moral character is unquestionably the chief advantage, and that which might of itself be sufficient to account, in a great measure, for the mixture of apparent evil in the universe, it is not perhaps all. I cannot but think likewise, that, independently of such moral advantages, some estimate is to be made of the relation which many of our physical evils bear to our mere mortality, as necessary for the production of successive races of mankind. On this relation, therefore, inconsiderable as it is, when compared with the moral advantage which we are

afterwards to examine, a few remarks may not be absolutely unimportant.

It is of advantage, upon the whole, if the earth, in either way, were to support exactly the same number of inhabitants, that there should be a succession of races, rather than one continued race. In the case of man, for example, of which we can best speak,—though we omit all consideration of the multitude of beings who are thus transmitted, after what is perhaps a necessary preparation, to a scene of higher existence, and think merely of the circumstances of this earth,—how much of human happiness would be destroyed, but for such a provision of alternate weakness to be sheltered, and love to be the guardian of weakness. Where there is no succession of races, all filial and parental and consanguineal relations of every sort are, of course, out of the question; and, consequently, all the happiness which such relations bestow. Indeed, in a long life of this kind, all the associations which are now productive of so much delight, would probably be wholly powerless. The home of fifty or a hundred years would cease perhaps to be our home; and be succeeded by so many other homes of the same period, that the effect on our feelings, thus divided among so many scenes, would be the same as if we had no country or home whatever. As things are at present, there is not a moment in which thousands of our kind are not deriving pleasure from an infinity of objects, that, to an immortal race of beings similar to us in every respect but mortality, would long have ceased to afford gratification. There is a constant succession of new spirits, full of all the alacrity of new existence, and enjoying the delight of new objects; and the contemplation of this very scene, so beautifully diversified with the quick hopes of youth, and the slower deliberative wisdom of manhood, is one of the chief pleasures which the universe, as an object of thought, affords.

But, though nothing more were gained than the mere relations of consanguinity, to which the present system gives rise, who could hesitate for a moment in determining by which of the two systems the greater good would be produced, — by an almost immortal earthly existence, coeval with the whole system of earthly things, or by that shorter mortality which allows, therefore, room for successive generations, and for all the kind affections which these generations, as they successively arise, evolve? To remove from life that tenderness which flows from the protection and instruction of infancy, and that tenderness which is reflected back from the little smiler who is the object of it, to all who are smiling around him, would be, in its ultimate effects on the maturer feelings of manhood, to destroy not the happiness merely, but half the virtue of mankind.

The very briefness of life, afflicting as it is in many cases, is, in some cases, — which, comparatively few as they may be, are not to be neglected in our general estimate,—essential to comfort. There are situations in which hope, that is so little apt to desert the afflicted, scarcely arises, unless when it speaks of other scenes, and in which death, the opener of immortality, is hailed as that gracious comforter who receives the combatant when the warfare of life is over; and, preparing for him at once the couch and the laurel, leads him to glory in leading him to repose.

I need not pause, however, to state the various advantages arising from a succession of races on earth, rather than an unvarying number. I may very safely consider you as taking this for granted.

If it be of advantage, then, that one generation of mankind should successively yield its place to another generation, the question comes to be, in what manner it is most expedient that death should take place? That, in whatever way it take place, it is most expedient, upon the whole, that it should occur according to some general law,

and not capriciously, I may consider as already proved ; and the question therefore is, what general provision for this great change would be most advantageous ?

It is evident, in the first place, that if life had followed a certain exact proportion in point of time, — if, like a clock, for example, that is wound up so as to tell the hour for a certain number of days, and then to cease wholly its motion, human life had ceased at a certain exact beat of the pulse, and could not cease but at that particular moment, all the advantage which arises from the uncertainty of the period of death must have been lost. Till the moment approached there could be no fear, and consequently no restraint, which fear alone imposes ; and when the period approached, life, if its continuation were at all an object of desire, could be only the sad calculation of the condemned criminal, who makes miserable every moment that passes, by the thought that he is on the point of losing it ; though to lose such a moment, or at least a succession of such moments, is itself no slight gain. By that provision which has made death uncertain in its period, man does not suspend his labours, and consequently withdraw his portion of service from mankind, till the last moment in which he can be useful. “*Sepulchri immemor, struit domos.*” He may toil for himself, indeed, in executing these vain projects ; but, in toiling for himself, he toils also for society.

It is of no slight importance, then, for the happiness both of the individual himself, and of those around him, and thus of society in general, that the moment of death should not be exactly foreseen. It must be made to depend, therefore, on circumstances in the physical constitution of individuals, which may arise or be readily induced at any time. It becomes a question, accordingly, whether these circumstances should be agreeable, indifferent, or disagreeable, — in short, whether there should be any malady preceding death.

If the train of symptoms that constitute what we now

term disease, were indifferent or agreeable, I need scarcely say how much of the salutary fear of death itself would be removed. It is not a mere separation from life, which is commonly considered under that name, but a combination of many images, which produce a far more powerful effect than the single image of death. The brave man, in the most perilous field of battle, it has hence often been remarked, is a coward, perhaps, on the bed of sickness. There was death, indeed, or the very near prospect of death, before him in both cases ; but in the one case, death was combined with images that made it scarcely terrible ; in the other case, with images more terrifying than itself. If, by exposure to the common causes of disease at present, we were to expose ourselves only to a succession of delightful feelings, how rash would those be, who are even at present rash ; and, even when the series of delightful feelings had begun, how little power comparatively would these have in exciting to the exertion that might be necessary for suspending their course. If hunger had been pleasing, who would have hastened as now to satisfy the appetite ? and, with respect to mortality, all the slight maladies resulting from exposure to causes of injury, may be considered as resembling the pain of hunger, that points out approaching evil, and warns how to obviate it. It is necessary, indeed, for the welfare of society, that death should not be exactly foreseen ; but it is necessary for its welfare also, that it should not be so very sudden and frequent, as to prevent a sufficient reliance on the continued co-operation of others, in the ordinary business of the world. The present constitution of things seems, even when considered only in its civil relations, admirably adapted for such a medium as is requisite ; giving to the circumstances that precede death that moderate terror which is necessary for saving from rash exposure to them, and still leaving death itself as an event, which it is in our power to avert perhaps for a time, but not wholly to avoid.

All the advantage, however, which is thus produced by the painful maladies of life, I readily confess, would be too slight to put in the balance with the amount of pain which arises from these maladies. But it is still a circumstance, and an important one, to be placed in the scale, though it be not sufficient to produce a preponderance or an equipoise. The true preponderating weight, compared with which every other circumstance seems almost insignificant, is that which I have next to consider — the relation of pain to moral character.

It is of advantage to the moral character in two ways ; as warning from vice by the penalties attached to vicious conduct, and as giving strength to virtue, by the benevolent wishes which it awakes and fosters, and by the very sufferings themselves which are borne with a feeling of moral approbation.

That pain, in many instances, warns and saves from vice, I scarcely stop to prove. It is in this way, indeed, that our bodily ailments become morally so important. How much of temperance arises from them ! The headach, the sickness, the languor, the more lasting disease, may, indeed, have little effect in overcoming habits of confirmed debauchery ; but, which is of far more importance, how many slight and temporary indulgences in vice do they prevent from being confirmed into habits ! How many ingenuous and noble minds are there, which, at a period of life when it is so difficult to resist example that offers itself in the seductive form of pleasure, would pass from excess to excess, and lose gradually all capacity of better wishes, but for those ailments which may be considered almost as a sort of bodily conscience — a conscience that reproaches for the past, and that, in reproaching for the past, calls to beware of the future ! In addition to this, however, as warning not from intemperance merely, but from every species of vice, is the conscience which most truly deserves that name — the sense of self-degradation,

when we have acted in a manner unworthy of a being so nobly gifted ; that dreadful voice which it is impossible to fly, because it is with us wherever we may fly, and which we can still only in one manner — by acting so as to merit, not its silence only, but its applause.

Such, independently of the beneficial influence of the fears of futurity which religion superadds, are the advantages of pain, as warning from vice. By the kindness of our Creator there is a connexion established between that bodily indulgence, which does not merely occupy the time of virtue, but renders us incapable of virtue, and a bodily uneasiness, that reminds us for what more important purposes we were formed ; and, by a still more salutary provision, there is a connexion still more permanent, by which the commission of a single crime is to us for ever after, in the painful remorse that is felt by us, an exhortation to virtue, and an exhortation that is more urgent and efficacious as the painful remorse itself is more severe.

The advantage of suffering, then, as a warning from vice, is sufficiently obvious ; at least in that constitution of things in which man is capable of vice and virtue.

But, in such a constitution of things, is it less necessary for the formation of virtue itself ; of that noble virtue which alone is worthy of man—a virtue that feels for the sorrows of others, and that bears its own, that can see a thousand pleasures tempting it from duty, and can look on them with as little desire as it would feel to quit its path when hastening to discharge some high office, merely to gather a few wild flowers that were blooming at a distance — a virtue, to which there may be peril but not fear, that sees nothing truly worthy of being dreaded but vice, and that counts no suffering above its strength which has conscience for its support, and God for its approver ?

When we look on some father of a family on his bed of sickness, what is it that we see ? There are, indeed, the obvious characters of suffering. On his own countenance

there is that paleness which seems as if it scarcely knew how to smile, and there is, perhaps, in his eye a sadness of more than disease ; a sadness which has its cause, not in his own heart, but in the hearts of others. On the faces of those around him there is no look but of grief ; for the hope that may rise at times is but the feeling of a moment, and is not sufficiently lasting to alter the fixed character of the melancholy countenance. All that our mere eyes behold then is grief. But do our hearts, when our eyes are thus occupied with an aspect of evil, see nothing more ? Do they not look beyond the moment, and perceive virtue present as truly as sorrow, and diffusing her better influence, which is not to be lost even when the grief has passed away ? The little bosoms around that bed have already acquired a benefit of which they are not conscious ; and, even when this hour is not present to them, the gentleness of this hour will still remain. There will be a quicker disposition to feel for others what they have themselves suffered, a warmer love for those who have wept with them together, a patience more ready to endure, from the remembrance of that venerable form, who, in resigning his spirit to God, resigned with meek submission, to the same almighty care, the happiness of many, whose happiness, far dearer to him than his own, was the last object which earth presented to his thought.

If the kind affections be blessings to the heart which feels them — blessings, of which the heart must be unworthy, indeed, that would divest itself of them, for all the happiness of another kind with which the most sensual would decorate to themselves a world of gaudy felicity, in which passive pleasure was all that was to be known, without one virtue to be felt, and consequently, without one virtuous act to be remembered, — if the kind affections be so inestimable, that also must be inestimable, by which these affections are best promoted. The grief of one, it must be remembered, may be the pity of many, and may foster, therefore, the bene-

volence of many,—so careful is nature to produce what is good in itself, at the least expense of individual suffering. But there must be grief if there be pity, and without occasional feelings of pity there is comparatively little regard. For which child is it, that the heart of the mother, who strives to divide her attentions equally, feels in secret, notwithstanding every effort to equalize her love, the warmest attachment? It is for that one which has been feeble from infancy, which has existed only by her continued care, which has deprived her of most hours of occupation or amusement abroad, of most hours, at night, of repose. This single instance might be sufficient to show the relation of pity to the growth of benevolent affection in general. There is not a house of suffering, which is not, by the very suffering which it presents, a school of virtue; and we do not distinguish the influence on our moral character which such lessons produce, merely because the influence is the result of innumerable lessons, the effect of each of which is slight, though, without the whole, there could be little affection of any sort. It is like the influence of the dew on the plant. We do not trace the operation of a single drop of moisture: but we know that, without the cherishing influence of many such drops, there could not be that flower which is at once so beautiful and so fragrant.

If we love, then, the benevolent affections, we must not repine that there exists, in nature, that which gives birth to those affections, and which calls them into exercise.

Vain are thy thoughts, O child of mortal birth,
And impotent thy tongue. Is thy short span
Capacious of this universal frame?
Thy wisdom all-sufficient? Thou, alas!
Dost thou aspire to judge between the Lord
Of nature and his works? To lift thy voice
Against the sov'reign order he decreed
All good and lovely?—To blaspheme the bands
Of tenderness innate, and social love,
Holiest of things;—by which the general orb

Of being, as by adamantine links,
 Was drawn to perfect union, and sustain'd
 From everlasting? Hast thou felt the pangs
 Of softening sorrow, of indignant zeal
 So grievous to the soul, as thence to wish
 The ties of nature broken from thy frame,—
 That so thy selfish, unrelenting heart
 Might cease to mourn its lot,—no longer then
 The wretched heir of evils not its own?
 O fair benevolence of generous minds!
 O man, by nature form'd for all mankind!¹

Such is the influence of suffering, in producing, or at least cherishing into far greater vividness of affection, the virtues of benevolence, and consequently its influence in increasing the delight which the benevolent affections, so richly, or rather so inexhaustibly, afford. But if its influence be decidedly favourable to this class of virtues, it is far more essential to the virtues of self-command. It is adversity in some one of its modifications which alone teaches us what we are. We must be in situations in which it is perilous to act, before we can know that we have the courage which is necessary for acting; we must engage with fortune before we know that we have the power of being its victor. It is for this reason that Seneca accounts him the most unhappy of mankind, whom the gods have not honoured with adversity, as worthy of subduing it. “*Nihil infelicius mihi videtur eo, cui nihil unquam evenit adversi. Non licuit enim illi se experiri: ut ex voto illi fluxerint omnia, ut ante votum; male tamen de illo dii judicaverunt. Indignus visus est, a quo vinceretur fortuna.*”²

There are griefs which we pity, and which it is virtue to pity. But who is there that has ever dared to pity Mutius Scaevola, when he placed his hand in the flame; Regulus, when he returned to torture; Arria, when she fixed the poniard in her breast, and said so truly, *Non dolet?*

¹ Pleasures of Imagination, book ii.

² De Providentia, cap. iii.

Should we not feel, in presuming to pity what common minds might shrink to behold, or shrink even to conceive, that we were guilty of a sort of insult to the magnanimity which we admired? There is a voice within us which would say, how enviable is that glorious spirit! and cowardly as our souls are, there is only the feeblest of mankind that could think of classing virtue, victorious over every sorrow which assails it, as on a level even with the empire of the world, if that empire were to be possessed by one, who could inflict torture, indeed, on thousands, but who would tremble at the thought of suffering one of the evils which he inflicts, though that evil were the slightest which could be inflicted, and the moral object for which he was called to suffer it, the noblest for which man could suffer.

In vain, therefore, do we strive to say that God, if he be good, should produce happiness only. He should indeed produce happiness; but if he should produce happiness, that is to say, what the world counts happiness, he should still more produce that which even the world itself regards with an admiration still greater than prosperity itself in its most flattering form. The very throbbing of our heart, at the tale of fortitude, confutes our querulous impiety. It tells us, that even we esteem it nobler to be placed in situations in which we may exercise virtue with the consciousness that we are acting as beseems man, and with the approbation of all who are themselves worthy of approbation, than to be placed in situations in which we have envy, indeed, but the envy only of those who think of our fortune, and not of ourselves. Our hearts then tell us, that the world in which man is best placed, is a world like that in which he is placed — a world in which, though he may occasionally have to struggle with affliction, he may in that very struggle have the delight of knowing, that he is more virtuous to-day than he was yesterday; that he is rising in excellence; that there are multitudes whom his example will animate to similar victory over

that evil within the heart, which is the only evil that deserves our detestation or our fear; and that he has become less unworthy of admission into the presence of that God, whose presence, when virtue is admitted to it, is at once immortality and joy.

If, in contrast with such a character, we were to strive to form to ourselves a picture of life without one suffering, but without one benevolent feeling, or one joy of conscience, why is it that we should blush to ourselves, in preferring such a life, and that we join internally with such conscious approbation in that great prayer, which Juvenal offers to us as all that is worthy of man?

Fortem posce animum, mortis terrore carentem ;
 Qui spatium vitae extremum inter munera ponat
 Naturae, qui ferre queat quoscunque labores,
 Nesciat irasci, cupiat nihil, et potiores
 Herculis aerumnas credat saevosque labores,
 Et venere, et coenis, et plumâ Sardanapali.¹

“Ask thy own heart,” says Akenside, after describing, in one of the most splendid passages of his poem, the admiration with which we still enter into the fortunes of the heroic states of antiquity, and the sorrow and indignation which we feel in thinking of the tyranny before which they sunk,—

Thus defaced,
 Thus widely mournful, when the prospect thrills
 Thy beating bosom, when the patriot's tear
 Starts from thine eye, and thy extended arm
 In fancy hurls the thunderbolt of Jove
 To fire the impious wreath on Philip's brow,
 Or dash Octavius from his trophied car ;
 Say, does thy secret soul repine to taste
 The big distress ? Or would'st thou then exchange
 Those heart-ennobling sorrows for the lot
 Of him who sits amid the gaudy herd

¹ Sat. x. 357-362.

Of mute barbarians bending to his nod,
 And bears aloft his gold-invested front,
 And says within himself, "I am a king,
 And wherefore should the clamorous voice of wo
 Intrude upon mine ear?" The baleful dregs
 Of these late ages, this inglorious draught
 Of servitude and folly, have not yet,
 Blest be the Eternal Ruler of the world!
 Defiled to such a depth of sordid shame
 The native honours of the human soul;
 Nor so effaced the image of its sire.¹

We feel, in such a case, that man is formed for something more than pleasure; that the afflictions of this world are sources of all that is noble in us; and that, what it is for the dignity of man to feel, it could not be unworthy of God to bestow.

LECTURE XXIII.

OF THE GOODNESS OF THE DEITY — OBJECTIONS OBIATED ; DUTIES
 TO THE DEITY.

My last Lecture was employed in considering the objection commonly urged against the goodness of God, from the existence of suffering in the universe.

If to suffer were indeed all, and no advantage flowed from it to the individual himself, or to those around him, then might its existence be a proof that he who willed it as a part of the great system of things, without relation to other parts of the system, was, at least to the extent of the suffering which it was possible for him not to produce, defective in benevolence. It is a conclusion which we

¹ Pleasures of Imagination, book ii.

might be unwilling to admit, indeed, because our hearts are too strongly impressed with that divine goodness which we feel in the constitution of our own internal frame, as much as in that magnificent display of it which is every where around us, not to shrink from such a belief, if expressed in words, as impiety and ingratitude. But, if to suffer be all, the belief, from the expression of which we should still perhaps shrink with a feeling of reluctant assent, must not the less be, in our heart, irresistible.

The question which is of so much importance for us then is, whether to suffer be the whole of suffering? or, whether there do not flow from it consequences which so far overbalance the temporary evil, as to alter its very nature? since, in that case, the existence of what is essential to so much good, far from being inconsistent with divine benevolence, would be a proof of that very benevolence. If, in such circumstances of greater resulting advantage, man had not been formed capable of suffering, God would then have been less good.

This question it was the object of my last Lecture to consider; and if the observations which I then made were satisfactory, they must have shown that, if virtue be excellent, the capacity of suffering by which virtue is formed or perfected, must, when this great relation of it is considered, be allowed to have itself an excellence that is relative to the excellence produced by it. Without it, we might, indeed, have been what the world, in its common language, terms happy, the passive subjects of a series of agreeable sensations: but we could not have had the delights of conscience; we could not have felt what it is to be magnanimous, to have the toil and the combat and the victory, to exult that we have something within us which is superior not to danger only, but which can vanquish even pleasure itself; to feel that we are not merely happier than we were, but nobler than we were, worthy of being admitted to other exercises of virtue, in which we are conscious of a

power that may hope to prevail in them, and worthy almost of the approving glance of that God who sees every secret conflict, and who is its judge and rewarder, as well as its witness.

When I say, that without virtue we might be, perhaps, what the world terms happy, I do injustice even to the sordid sentiments of those, whom, in opposition to the better part of mankind, we commonly designate by the name of the world. The very lowest of the mob may wish, indeed, for the grandeur which he sees in the palace, and the equipage of the indolent voluptuary. But his highest admiration is not for him. It is, if his country was ever oppressed, for some hero, whose adventures in struggling to resist that oppression, have become traditionary in the very tales and ballads of the cottage, — who, in the whole course of his struggle, had difficulty after difficulty to encounter, and whose life of peril at last, perhaps, was terminated with the triumph of conscience, indeed, but in all the bodily torture which a tyrant could inflict. If a religious persecution have ever raged in his land, his admiration is in like manner kept for those whom he feels a sort of pride in considering as martyrs of his faith, who are known to him, not as rich or powerful, but as sufferers, poor, perhaps, like himself, and distinguished only by that heroic suffering which endears them to his reverence. There is not a peasant of the rudest order, who would think for a moment of comparing to such men the indolent and careless possessor of half the land which he has ever seen. If the choice were given to him of either situation, and if he were to prefer, as, under the influence of sensual desire, he might prefer, the passive ease and luxury of the one to the active virtue of the other, his own heart would say to him that he had made an unworthy choice; it would tell him that he had preferred the less to the more noble; he would have remorse even in entering on the possession of what he before re-

garded as happiness, and the martyr or the hero would haunt his memory like the remembrance of a crime.

Even the world, then, in their estimation of excellence, look to something more than a succession of passive sensations; and it is surely a singular misconception of benevolence, which would require of God that he should make man no nobler than that species of being, which even common minds feel to be less noble than the being which man is capable of becoming, in the present system of things;—that it should be an imperfection in the divine goodness to have rendered us susceptible of heroic virtue,—that is to say, to have placed us in circumstances without which there can be no heroic virtue,—and that it was incumbent on him, from the very excellence of his own nature, to have made us such, as the best and noblest of us would blush to be.

Count all the advantage prosperous Vice attains,
'Tis but what Virtue flies from — or disdains.¹

There is an ambiguity in the term happiness, like that which, on a former occasion, it seemed to me of so much importance to point out to you, in the analogous word desire, as giving rise to much of the sophistry on this and on other kindred questions, in which it furnished the declaimer against pure disinterested virtue with the appearance of a deceitful triumph, when a clearer analysis of a single word, explanatory of its double meaning, might have shown the fallacy on which the triumph was founded. Happiness is sometimes used as synonymous with all that is desirable; in which case, to a good mind, that can perceive all the relations of suffering, and feel the important moral advantages which result from it, it may be said to include, in certain circumstances, in which pleasure could

¹ Essay on Man, Ep. iv. 89-90.

not be enjoyed without a sacrifice of virtue, even suffering itself. At other times it is used to signify only what is immediately pleasurable, and therefore in this sense excludes suffering. What is pleasurable, and what is desirable, are not to be accounted words of exactly the same import, if we attend to all the variety of our desires. I have shown, in some of my former Lectures, that in many cases, indeed in the greater number of cases, if we analyze with sufficient minuteness the whole mental process, so as to discover what it is which is directly present to the mind at the very moment of the desire, it is not pleasure which we thus directly desire, but some other immediate object, which pleasure may indeed accompany, but to which pleasure is only an accompaniment. That the immediate object of our desire, for example, in rushing to the relief of one who is in danger, is not the pleasure of giving relief, but the relief itself, the subsequent contemplation of which is, indeed, by a bountiful provision of Heaven, associated with delight — as the failure in the attempt to afford it is accompanied with pain — but which we desire instantly, without regard to our own personal delight that would follow it, or the pain that would be felt by us if the relief were not given. The same constitution of our nature which has made pleasure directly desirable, has made many other objects of our thought directly desirable, and among the rest virtue; not for the single reason that virtue is pleasant, any more than we desire pleasure as pleasure, merely because it may be consistent with virtue, but because it is the very nature of virtue, and the very nature of pleasure, as contemplated by us, to be desirable, whether separate or combined. These different objects, which in many cases coincide as desirable, in many cases may be balanced against each other; and we may, when both are incompatible, according as one or the other is to certain minds, or in certain circumstances, an object of greater or less desire, sacrifice a mere pleasure for a virtue, — a virtue

for a mere pleasure. We may not always, then, in the competition of two objects, desire what is immediately the more pleasing, in the strict sense of that term ; for pleasure, as mere pleasure, we have seen, is far from being the sole direct object of desire ; but it is very evident that whatever be the direct object of desire, we must always desire that which has seemed to us the more desirable, since this is only another mode of expressing the very fact of the superior desire itself ; and the double sense of the term desirable, in expressing this prevailing influence, and consequently of happiness, which is regarded as synonymous with the gratification of our desires, has led to the supposition that pleasure, which is thus often used as synonymous with that which is desirable, is truly the uniform object of our desire. It seems, therefore, in this sense, when desirableness is falsely limited to mere pleasure, that to exclude suffering is necessary to our happiness, and therefore to the goodness of that Being who wills our happiness. But if happiness be understood more generally as the attainment of that which, in all the circumstances in which we may be placed, is regarded by us as most desirable ; then suffering itself is in many situations essential to it, when to suffer is to be more virtuous ; and not to have produced the capacity of that virtuous suffering, which in many cases we prefer to pleasure, would in those cases have contributed less to our happiness, in this best sense, and consequently been less benevolent, than not to have produced the pleasure, which even we regard as inferior to the suffering.

*Ipsa quidem virtus pretium sibi ; solaque late
Fortunae secura nitet, nec fascibus ullis
Erigitur plausuque petit clarescere vulgi,
Nil opis externae cupiens, nil indiga laudis,
Divitiis animosa suis.*

It is for its own sake, indeed, as indicative of the moral excellence of our nature, that virtue truly is to us of richest value. Even though all preference of it, however, were a

mere balancing of pleasures, without any regard to its own intrinsic excellence as an object of noblest desire, the capacity of suffering, as essential to the highest pleasures of conscience, might be truly a gift of divine bounty. At present, with all the distraction of earthly things, and earthly passions, there is perhaps no pleasure so delightful as the remembrance of our own heroic conduct, in any occasion that admitted of heroism; and in a state of purer being, the remembrance of that heroism may be still more elevating and delightful. If, with all the notions which it involves, of our virtue and the approving regard of God, it constitute the highest pleasure of which a created being is capable, it is no impeachment of any divine perfection, to suppose that the Deity, though with the power of making his creatures happy in various ways, could not give to a finite and dependent being any happiness greater than that which is by its very nature the greatest which the constitution of a finite and dependent being admits, any more than even he could make a circle triangular, or form a line larger than an infinite one. The joys of conscience, as they extend through our immortal existence, might thus, even in a barter of pleasures and pains, be very cheaply purchased by the short sufferings of earth; and God, therefore, be benevolent, in placing us in circumstances which enable us to make the purchase.

This might be the case, even though the most heroic generosity were to be valued only as an instrument of pleasure, and though we were to omit in our estimate of virtue all for which it is most precious in the eyes of the virtuous. "*Prospera in plebem ac vilia ingenia deveniunt; at calamitates terroresque mortalium sub jugum mittere, proprium magni viri est. Magnus es vir; sed unde scio, si tibi fortuna non dat facultatem exhibendae virtutis? Descendisti ad Olympia; si nemo praeter te, coronam habes, victoriam non habes.*" Think not, I beseech you, says the same eloquent writer, that the calamities with which the

gods may have favoured us, as occasions of virtue, are to be dreaded as terrible. They rather are to be esteemed wretched, who lie torpid in luxurious ease, whom a sluggish calm detains on the great voyage, like vessels that lie weltering on a sea without a gale. The bravest of the army are they whom the commander selects for the most perilous service. They do not repine against their general when they quit the camp. They say only, with a consciousness of their own strength of heart, He has known well how to choose. Such, too, be our feelings when we are required to suffer what is terrible only to the coward that shrinks from it. Let us exult in the thought that Heaven has counted us worthy of showing what the noble nature of man can overcome. "*Nolite, obsecro vos, expavescere ista, quae dii immortales, velut stimulos, admovent animis. Calamitas virtutis occasio est. Illos merito quis dixerit miseros, quos, velut in mari lento, tranquillitas iners detinet. Deus quos probat, quos amat, indurat, recognoscit, exercet. Quare, in castris quoque, periculosa fortissimis imperantur. Dux lectissimos mittit, qui nocturnis hostes aggrediantur insidiis, aut explorent iter, aut praesidium loco dejiciant. Nemo eorum qui exeunt dicit, Male de me Imperator meruit; sed, Bene judicavit. Idem dicant, quicunque jubentur pati timidis ignavisque flebilis: Digni visi sumus Deo, in quibus experiretur, quantum humana natura possit pati.*"¹

When we see, then, what the world calls the sufferings of the virtuous, let us not think of the sufferings only,—for this would be as absurd as to count all the fatigues of the husbandman without thinking of the harvest. Let us think of the suffering only, as it is regarded by the sufferer himself; as that which proves to him what he is, — which gives him the opportunity of knowing that he is so constituted as to be capable, not of pleasure merely, but of that

¹ Seneca de Providentia, cap. iv.

which is far dearer to him than pleasure itself, and of which he would not resign the noble consciousness for all the sluggish delights of all the luxurious. Let us think of him as the inhabitant of another world, to which his virtues, those virtues which he is now maturing, are all that can attend him from this earth, — when the luxuries of earth must long have perished, or be remembered only from their relation to those moral feelings which are the only feelings that are immortal.

“The opulence of a wicked man,” says an ingenious French writer, “the high posts to which he is elevated, the homage which is paid to him, excite your chagrin. What! say you, is it for such men that wealth and dignities are reserved? Cease your unjust murmurs! If what you regret as good were substantially good, the wicked would not enjoy it; you would be the possessor. What would you say of a great man, a Turenne, or a Condé, who, after having saved his country, should complain that his services had been ill requited, because, in his presence, some sugar-plumbs had been distributed to children of which he had not got his share? Your complaint is not better founded. Has God, then, nothing with which to recompense you but a few pieces of coin, and honours that are as perishable as they are frivolous!”

Weak, foolish man! will Heaven reward us there
 With the same trash mad mortals wish for here?
 Go, like the Indian, in another life
 Expect thy dog, thy bottle, and thy wife;
 As well as dream such trifles are assign'd
 As toys and empires for a godlike mind!¹

“O God!” exclaims the Persian poet Sadi, “have pity on the wicked! for thou hast done every thing for the good, in having made them good.”

In giving to the good that nature by which they are

¹ Essay on Man, Ep. iv. lines 173-180.

capable of virtuous progress, God has indeed done every thing for the good,—far more, unquestionably, than if he had placed them in a world such as those who at present object to his benevolence, would have counted perhaps worthy of his creation,—a world of such indolence and passive pleasure as the most worthless, perhaps, are capable of enjoying here,—a world from which, if the option were given, a noble spirit would gladly hasten into that better world of difficulty, and virtue, and conscience, which is the scene of our present exertion. It is good to have given us pleasure, but it is better to have given us that which even ourselves feel to be nobler than pleasure.

I have dwelt the longer on this point, because it seemed to me the most important on which I could have dwelt. Our relation to God, to our Creator, Preserver, Rewarder, is surely the relation which deserves most to be considered by us; and I am anxious that your minds should not, with respect to that great Being, acquire habits of unworthy suspicion, which, as I endeavoured to illustrate yesterday, by an allusion to the slighter relationships of earthly intimacy, we should blush to feel in the case of man. If, when any kindness was conferred on us by a friend, we were to sit down and deliberately consider whether he was kind in conferring it on us, whether it was not possible for him to have done for us a little more, and whether we ought not, therefore, to complain of him as selfishly penurious, rather than to feel gratitude to him as beneficent; if we were to do this in the case of an earthly friend, should we look upon ourselves with the same approbation? And is God, indeed, less worthy of our confidence than the creature whom he has made?

It is when we rely fully on his goodness that we truly enjoy that goodness; it is then that adversity disappears as adversity, that there is no evil which we may not convert into a source of advantage,—because what is most afflicting is only the lesson, or the trial, or the consummation of our

virtue, — that all nature is embellished to us by the divine presence, as the scene of actions which it is noble to perform, or of sufferings which, when borne with the feelings with which the virtuous bear them, it would scarcely be too strong an expression to term delightful.

God, then, who has poured on us so much enjoyment, of which it is virtuous to partake, in the whole system of nature, and in the frame of our mind, is manifestly benevolent in calling to us to enjoy; and though less manifestly, he is not less truly benevolent in the evils which he has given to our virtue to bear, — the common wants, by the influence of which the whole multitudes of our race are formed into a society active in the reciprocation of mutual services, and the greater occasional sufferings, or voluntary perils, which excite the compassion or the veneration of others, and cherish, in the heroic sufferer himself, a spirit of gentle or sublime virtue, without the consciousness of which, the moral scene would scarcely be an object of delightful interest, even to human regard.

If the system of things has thus been framed by a God of benevolence, it is under the moral government of a benevolent God that the world subsists, under the government of a God, who has shown too clearly, by the universal feelings which he has given to all his moral creatures, his love of virtue, and his disapprobation of vice, to leave any doubt as to the nature of his own high estimate of human actions. If it be impossible for ourselves not to feel the approvableness of certain actions, and the delinquency that is implied in certain other actions, it is impossible for us not to extend these feelings to other minds, which we suppose to consider with the same freedom from passion, and the same accurate knowledge of every circumstance, the same actions that are approved or condemned by ourselves. To believe that pure generosity and pure malice which every human being loves in the one case and hates in the other case, as soon as he contemplates them, as if pointed out to

his love and hatred by the author and enlightener of the heart, are, to that very author and enlightener of the heart, the same in every respect, except as he has chosen to distinguish them in our judgment, would be as difficult for us, or almost as difficult, as to believe that a circle and a triangle have different properties, only as conceived by us, and appear to involve exactly the same proportions and relations to that perfect intelligence, whom some of the Greek philosophers have distinguished by the title of the Supreme Geometer.

What we regard with moral approbation or disapprobation, we are led then by our very nature to regard as objects of approbation or disapprobation, not to all mankind only, but to every being whom we imagine to contemplate the actions, and especially to him, who, as quickest to perceive and to know, must, as we think, by this very superiority of discernment, be quickest also to approve and condemn.

It is of this moral approbation or disapprobation in the divine nature, that we speak, when we speak of what is commonly termed the justice of God. The merit or demerit, which it is impossible for us not to feel, we consider as felt by him who has thus distinguished them to our heart, and who has the power of making happy what he approves, and of verifying to the wicked the anticipations of their own remorse. The divine justice, as it is an object of conception to human beings, is nothing more than the ampler development of these human feelings, feelings that are human indeed, in our transient love or hatred, but the reference of which to the Deity depends on a principle of our nature, as universal as that which leads us to the very conception of the Deity as a Power existing now and existing before the world was made. It is by the analogy of human design, that we infer in the universe the operation of a mightier designer; by the analogy of human sentiment, we infer, in like manner, in the Creator and

Ruler of the universe, those moral feelings by which he is not the creator and ruler only of mankind, but their judge, — a judge whose approbation is already felt in the conscience of the good, as his disapprobation is already not less felt in the gloomy and trembling conscience of the guilty.

Such are the views of the nature of the Divine Being to which we are led, from those traces of his character which the universe, as formed by him, and especially our own spiritual frame, which is to us the most important part of the universe, exhibit. The most interesting of all inquiries terminates in the most pleasing of all results. Whatever power it might have been that created us, benevolent or cruel, to that power we must have been subject, without any means of shelter, because there was no superior sovereign of nature, who might protect and avenge us. We might have been, in misery, what our imagination, after bringing together all the forms of torture which the oppressions of this earth can afford, would be too poor of images to represent. Instead of a tyrant, however, in the heavens, we discover a power from which we have no need to fly for succour; since, whatever might be the kindness to which we might wish to fly, it would be a kindness less than that from which we fled, — a kindness far less than that which created for us this glorious abode, and which gave us the means of rising, with the consciousness of virtue, from all that is excellent on earth, to sublimer and happier excellence, in progressive stages of immortality.

In this view of the wisdom, and power, and benevolence of the Supreme Being is involved, what is commonly termed our duty to God. In one sense of the word, indeed, all our duties are duties which we owe to him, who has endowed us with every gift which we possess, and who has commanded these duties, by that voice of conscience which speaks in every breast. But the duties to which I now allude, are those which have their divine object more

immediately in view, and which consider him in those gracious characters in which his works reveal him to us. It is our duty to love the benevolence to which we owe so much, to feel pleasure in tracing every display of that benevolence in the happiness of every thing that lives, and, in all that we value most in ourselves, to rejoice in feeling its relation to the goodness from which it was derived, and in expressing our dependence, not as if the expression of it were a task enjoined, but with the readiness of love, that overflows in acknowledgments of kindness received, only because it overflows with gratitude for the kindness. If a mere earthly friend, whose affection we have delighted to share, is separated from us, for any length of time, by the ocean, or a few kingdoms that lie between, how delightful to us is every memorial of his former presence. Our favourite walks and favourite seats continue still to be favourite walks and favourite seats, or rather they acquire new beauty, in the thought that they were beautiful to other eyes that now are absent. There is no conversation so pleasing to us, as that of which his virtues are the subject; and even the rudest sketch of his drawing, or the verses which he may have left unfinished, are regarded by us with far more delightful admiration, than paintings and poems, which surpass them in every charm, but that which friendship alone could give. We not merely feel all this affection for our friend, but we feel too, that it would be a sort of crime against friendship, to regard with indifference any thing which related to him; and if this be a crime with respect to earthly friendship, it is surely not less a crime, when its object is the friendship that has been the source of all the happiness which we have felt. To be surrounded with the divine goodness, and yet to feel no joy in contemplating the magnificent exhibition of it; to admire any works rather than those of God, and, far from delighting to speak or think of his moral perfections, to give our thoughts and our conversation in preference to the

virtues, or still more gladly, to the vices of those of whom the name is perhaps almost all that is known to us ; this is to fail, with respect to the noblest of beings, in a duty which, if that noblest of beings could divest himself of his perfections, and become, with far less kindness to us, a creature like ourselves, we then should blush to violate to our mortal benefactor.

Our first duty, then, to the Deity, is to dwell with delight on the contemplation of his perfections, to cultivate our devout feelings as the happiest and noblest feelings of which our nature is capable, and to offer that worship of the heart, which is the only offering that can be made by man to his Creator. "*Primus est deorum cultus deos credere ; deinde reddere illis majestatem suam, reddere bonitatem, sine qua nulla majestas est : scire, illos esse qui praesident mundo, qui universa vi sua temperant, qui humani generis tutelam gerunt, interdum curiosi singulorum. Hi nec dant malum nec habent ; ceterum castigant quosdam, et coercent ; et irrogant poenas, et aliquando specie boni puniunt. Vis deos propitiare ? bonus esto. Satis illos coluit quisquis imitatus est.*"¹ Would you propitiate the Gods ? Be good. Whoever has imitated them, has already offered to them the most acceptable worship.

Next in order to the duties of veneration and devout acknowledgment of the divine goodness, is the duty of that unrepining submission to his will, without which there can be no real belief of the providential goodness, which the lips, indeed, may have professed to believe, but the lips only. If it would be our duty to give ready obedience to the arrangements which an earthly sovereign makes, for the security and general happiness of his little state, in some season of peril, though it involve the sacrifice of many of our personal comforts ; to quit, perhaps, our peaceful homes, and expose ourselves, in the band of our fellow-citizens, to

¹ Seneca, Epist. xcv.

the inconveniences and dangers of a protracted warfare, that is foreign to all our tranquil habits ; or to send to the same perilous warfare, those whose life of rising virtues is the only earthly thing to which we have been accustomed to look for the happiness of our own declining years ; if we should feel it guilt and disgrace to withhold the offering, when the happiness of a single state is the object, and when he who requires the sacrifice is but a fallible being like ourselves, how much greater guilt and moral disgrace must it be to hesitate in making those sacrifices, or to repine when they are made, which are demanded by wisdom that is owned by us to be incapable of error, for purposes which, as our own hearts have declared, must be purposes beneficial to mankind. Shall the warrior rejoice in dying in battle for his country, or even for his prince ! and shall we feel no joy in finishing a life that has been accordant with the divine will, in whatever manner the same divine will may require it of us ? or, if the easy offering of life be not that which is required, in bearing a little longer for the whole community of mankind, any of those evils which we should never shrink from bearing, for that small portion of the community which our country comprehends ? “ Shall others say, O beloved city of Cecrops ! ” exclaims Marcus Aurelius, “ and shall I not rather say, O beloved city of our God ! ”

These views of the Divinity, the habitual love of his perfections, and ready acquiescence in the dispensations of his universal providence, are not more suitable to the divine nature, than productive of delight and consolation to him who entertains them. They distinguish, indeed, the virtuous from the rest of mankind, in serenity of happiness, as much as in the purity of heart from which that delightful serenity is derived.

He sees with other eyes than theirs. Where they
Behold a sun, he views a Deity :
What makes them only smile, makes him adore.

Titles and honours, if they prove his fate,
He lays aside, to find his dignity :
Himself too much he prizes to be proud ;
And nothing thinks so great in man, as man.
Too dear he holds his interest, to neglect
Another's welfare, or his right invade :
Their interest, like a lion, lives on prey.
They kindle at the shadow of a wrong :
Wrong he sustains with temper, looks on heaven,
Nor stoops to think his injurer his foe.
Nought but what wounds his virtue wounds his peace.
His joys create, theirs murder future bliss.
To triumph in existence his alone ;
And his alone triumphantly to think,
His true existence is not yet begun.¹

The true existence of man is, indeed, scarcely begun on earth. There is an immortality awaiting him, and all which is most worthy of being prized in the short period of his mortal life, is the relation which it may bear to those endless ages that are to follow it. In my next Lecture, I shall inquire into the grounds of our belief in this future state of continued existence.

LECTURE XXIV.

OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

IN my last Lecture, I finished the remarks which I had to offer on the relation which man, in his earthly existence, bears to that greatest of Beings, from whom every thing which exists has derived its origin. We found, in the phenomena of the universe, abundant proof of a designing

¹ Night Thoughts, Night viii.

Power, that arranged them in their beautiful regularity; and, in the happiness which they tend to produce, a proof not less strong, of the benevolence which has arranged them for purposes so gracious.

When we consider the relation of man to his Creator, however, do we consider only a relation that terminates with the few years of our mortal life? When every thing external fades upon our eye, does the spirit within, that almost gave its own life to every thing external, fade likewise? or is there not something over which the accidents that injure or destroy our mortal frame have no power; that continues still to subsist, in the dissolution of all our bodily elements, and that would continue to subsist, though not the body only, but the earth, and the sun, and the whole system of external things, were to pass into new forms of combination, or to perish, as if they had never been, in the void of the universe?

There is within us an immortal spirit. We die to those around us, indeed, when the bodily frame, which alone is the instrument of communion with them, ceases to be an instrument, by the absence of the mind which it obeyed. But, though the body moulders into earth, that spirit which is of purer origin returns to its purer source. What Lucretius says of it is true, in a sense far nobler than that which he intended:

*Cedit item retro, de terrâ quod fuit ante,
In terram; sed quod missum est ex ætheris oris,
Id rursus, cœli fulgentia templa receptant.*¹

That we do not die wholly, is a belief so consolatory to our self-importance, — to which annihilation seems more than a mere privation of enjoyment, and rather itself a positive evil, — that our hope of immortality may be supposed, like every other hope, to render us credulous of that

¹ De Rerum Natura, lib. ii. 998-1000

which we are eager to believe. There is a principle, too, which I pointed out to you when I attempted to explain the peculiar vividness of our love of glory as a mere emotion, that may aid this credulity,—a principle by which the very thought of our name, as our name, at the most distant period, seems to us to involve the reality of the existence of those very feelings which are all that seem to us in our conception to constitute ourselves. To think of any thing as ours at any particular period, is, as I then explained to you, to feel as if we were truly existing at that particular period; because it is to have combined the conception of the particular object, whatever it may be, with the conception of that self which is known to us by some conscious feeling, and which, as conceived by us, therefore, must always carry with it the notion of consciousness; and the frequency of this illusion, by which, in thinking of our name, or of other objects connected with us, we extend into futurity the conception of our consciousness, though it might not be sufficient to produce the belief of immortality, must be allowed at least to strengthen the belief, if once existing. It is necessary, therefore, in entering on an inquiry in which we are so deeply concerned, to divest ourselves as much as possible of the influence of our wishes; and, if we cannot inquire with the impartiality of absolute indifference, to inquire at least with the caution of those who know their own partial wishes, and, knowing these, know in what manner they are likely to be influenced.

The change which death produces is the most striking of all the changes which we can witness, even though we should not believe it to imply the dissolution of the principle that felt and thought in life. It is at least to our senses the apparent cessation of every thought and feeling. There is no bloom on the cheek, no motion in the limb, no lustre in the eye. Even these are but the slightest changes. There is no voice or look of reflection, no apparent consciousness, nothing but a little quicker tendency to decay,

to distinguish him, who, but a few moments before, was perhaps wise, and cheerful, and active, full of remembrances and hopes, from the insensible statue which has been dug from the quarry, and slowly fashioned into the semblance of his shape. With such a change before our eyes, it is unquestionably allowable to doubt, at least, whether any thing have truly survived this change; or whether thought and feeling have not ceased wholly by the injury of that mechanism, in connexion with which alone they become objects of our knowledge.

It is unquestionably allowable, as I have said, to those who have never made the phenomena of the mind, and the nature of the substance which exhibits these phenomena, objects of their reflection, to doubt whether all the functions of life may not be destroyed in that moment which destroys the more obvious functions, that alone come under the survey of our senses. If the phenomena of thought be phenomena that consist only in the play of certain organs, the destruction of those organs must be the destruction of the thought itself. It would then be as absurd to speak of the continuance of consciousness, when there are no conscious organs, as to speak of the continuance of musical vibrations, without a single elastic body.

If there be nothing, then, distinct from the material frame, which is manifestly subject to decay, our doubt may be converted into certainty, or at least may almost be converted into certainty. We may say, then, that death which destroys the organization, destroys the capacity of feeling, because it destroys that in which feeling consists. The elements of that which once thought, may subsist in a different form, and may, perhaps, even at some remote period, become again elements of a similar organization, and again constitute propositions or passions, as they before constituted some truth or error, or emotion of love or hate; but they must meet again, by some new arrangement, before they can thus become feelings; and, in the mean

time, they may have been blown about by the winds, or become a part of these very winds, or formed elements of various bodies, solid, liquid, or gaseous, as little sentient as the other insensible elements with which they mingled, in all the play of chemical compositions and decompositions.

This conclusion, as to the absolute mortality or chemical decomposition of that which feels and thinks, seems irresistible, if our reasonings and passions, and whatever forms our consciousness, be only certain particles variously mingled, and variously adhering or changing their place, according to the new play of chemical affinities, as new elements may be added to disturb the particles of thought, or certain other elements subtracted from the thinking compound. But, on this supposition of particles of thought, the whole force of the conclusion from the change in decomposition of the other bodily particles, depends. If our material frame be not thought itself, but only that which has a certain relation to the spiritual principle of thought, so as to be subservient to its feelings and volitions, and to perform the beautiful functions of life, as long as the relation, which he who established it made to depend on a certain state of the corporeal organs, remains, it is as little reasonable to conclude from the decay or change of place of the particles of the organs essential to the mere state of relative subserviency, that the spirit, united with these organs, has ceased to exist, as it would be to conclude, that the musician to whom we have often listened with rapture, has ceased to exist when the strings of his instrument are broken or torn away. It no longer, indeed, pours on our ear the same delightful melodies; but the skill which poured from it those melodies has not perished with the delightful sounds themselves, nor with the instrument that was the organ of enchantment. The enchanter himself, without whom the instrument would have been powerless, exists still, to produce sounds as delightful; and in the intervals of melody, the creative spirit, from which the

melody originally flowed, can delight itself with remembered or imagined airs, which exist only as remembered or imagined, and are themselves as it were a part of the very spirit which conceives them.

It is on the nature of the principle of thought, then, as mere matter, or as something distinct from matter, that the chief force of the argument seems to me to depend. If matter be all, and that which thinks and feels, decay, like every other part of the body, though the cause of immortality may even then not be absolutely hopeless, it must be allowed to have many difficulties not easy to be removed. If matter be not all, or rather, if matter have nothing in common with thought, but be absolutely and wholly distinct from the thinking principle, the decay of matter cannot be considered as indicative of the decay of mind, unless some other reason can be shown for the mental dissolution, than the mere external decay itself; still less can it be considered as indicative of such mental decay, if every notion which we are led to form of the mind, imply qualities inconsistent with the very possibility of such a change of decomposition as the body exhibits.

The great inquiry then is, whether our thoughts and feelings be, in the strictest sense of the term, particles of matter; a certain number of particles affected in a certain manner in that which we term an organ, forming half a hope, a different number of particles forming half a fear; or the quarters and halves of our hopes and fears, being formed not merely of different numbers of sentient particles, but perhaps too of particles that are themselves in their absolute nature, or in their specific affection at the moment, essentially different.

In the whole course of our inquiries into the phenomena of the mind, I abstained from allusion to the great controversy of the materialists and immaterialists, or at least made only very slight allusion to it, because the analysis and arrangement of the mental phenomena, considered

simply as phenomena that succeed each other in a certain order, and are felt to bear to each other certain relations, are independent of any views which we may be led to form of the nature of the substance itself, which exhibits these various but regular phenomena of thought; and I was desirous of accustoming you to fix your attention chiefly on those simpler and more productive investigations. But though the materialist and the immaterialist may unite in the results of their analytical inquiries into the complex phenomena of thought, and though they may form similar arrangements of those phenomena, simple or compound, their different opinions as to the nature of the substance which displays these phenomena, cannot be regarded as unimportant, in a question which relates to the mere permanence of the substance itself; a permanence which is to be admitted or rejected, very nearly, according as one or other of those opinions is itself to be admitted or rejected.

Is there any principle of thought and feeling, then, distinct from that extended, divisible mass, which we term the corporeal frame?

If our consciousness were to be trusted, as to the indivisibility of the sentient principle, it would scarcely be necessary to make any inquiry beyond it. The savage, indeed, in the lowest form of savage life, who is too much occupied with bodily necessities, to think of himself in any other light than as that which requires food, and feels pain from the want of a necessary supply of it, or as that which is capable of inflicting or receiving a deadly blow, may never have put the question to his own mind, what he is, and may die without having ever believed or disbelieved in a state of after-existence. The philosopher, who has reflected enough to discover the folly of half the vulgar creed, which is far from being the most difficult part of philosophy, but who has not reflected and discriminated enough to discover the truth of the other half of a system, which he finds it easier to condemn as a whole, yet which

may be true in part, though false too in part, may leave the existence of an immaterial spirit, to be believed by the believers of witchcraft and second sight; and giving his whole attention to the corporeal process, of which he is able to trace series of changes that are wholly unknown to the vulgar, may think that in thus tracing series of motions unobserved by them, he is detecting the principle of life itself. But all mankind, the mob, the sage inquirer, the very sceptic himself, when they speak or think of themselves, feel a sort of unity, in which there are no parts, the unity of a sentient being, which, if they think of organs at all, is that which sees in the eye, hears in the ear, smells in the nostrils, itself one in all, and not merely sentient, in the strict meaning of that term, but the subject of various other feelings of different classes, remembrances, comparisons, hopes, fears, love, indignation. The verbal proposition may never have been formed in the mind — *It is one being which has been the subject of all the feelings of life*—and merely because the proposition never may have been framed in words, or clearly developed, the multitude may be regarded as not having felt the truth itself. Yet, if we were to ask of any one, however little accustomed to philosophic inquiries, whether he was the same thinking being at the end of the year as at the beginning of it, he would smile at our question; and would not smile less if we were to speak to him of the difference of three-fourths of a joy and half a joy, or of the many co-existing happinesses in the many co-existing atoms that form the happy organ; the simplicity and sameness of the thinking principle, of that principle of which we speak as essentially one, whenever we use the word I, having been felt by him tacitly, without the application of those technical terms, the employment of which might, perhaps, render obscure to him what had no obscurity till it was darkened with language.

What am I, whence produced, and for what end ?
 Whence drew I being, to what period tend ?
 Am I the abandon'd orphan of blind chance,
 Dropp'd by wild atoms in disorder'd dance ?
 Or from an endless chain of causes wrought,
 And of unthinking substance, born with thought :
 Am I but what I seem, mere flesh and blood,
 A branching channel with a mazy flood ?
 The purple stream that through my vessels glides,
 Dull and unconscious flows, like common tides,
 The pipes, through which the circling juices stray
 Are not that thinking I, no more than they :
 This frame, compacted with transcendent skill,
 Of moving joints, obedient to my will ;
 Nursed from the fruitful glebe, like yonder tree,
 Waxes and wastes—I call it mine, not me.
 New matter still the mould'ring mass sustains ;
 The mansion changed, the tenant still remains ;
 And from the fleeting stream repair'd by food,
 Distinct, as is the swimmer from the flood.¹

Such would be our belief if we were to attend to our consciousness alone. It would tell us, that what we term I, is not many, but one ; that it is the same being which hears and sees, compares and remembers, and that the very notion of plurality and division is as inconsistent with the notion of self, as the notions of existence and non-existence. This our mere consciousness would tell us. But does not reason, in this case, aid rather than lessen the force of this unreflecting belief ?

If any lover of paradoxes were to assert, that fragrance is a sound, music a brilliant colour, hope or resentment a sensation of touch, he surely could not expect a very ready assent from those whom he addressed ; and yet, void of proof as all these propositions would be, and opposite to our experience, and therefore relatively absurd, they would imply no absolute absurdity. The same great Being who

¹ Arbuthnot.

has made the sensations of fragrance, and colour, and melody, to result from affections of certain organs, might have made them to arise from causes reciprocally different. The affection of the organ of smell might, under a different arrangement, have been followed by the sensation which we now ascribe to sound ; the affection of the ear, by the sensation which we now ascribe to fragrance ; and the propositions that are now absurd, relatively to our present arrangement, would then have been relatively true. The assertor of materialism, however, is the assertor of a doctrine not relatively absurd only, but, as it appears to me, absolutely absurd ; a doctrine which does not state agreements of qualities, of which there is no proof, but agreements of qualities which are absolutely incompatible. In affirming the principle of thought to be material, he makes an affirmation very nearly the same in kind, or at least as contradictory, as if he were to pronounce of a whole, that it is essentially different from its constituent parts, or of one, that it is seven hundred and fifty.

So much of the fallacy of the arguments of the materialist, in endeavouring to reconcile with his system the simplicity of thought, arises from the false supposition of unity, which he ascribes to the thinking organ, as if it were one substance, because he has given one name to a multitude of substances, that it will be necessary to call your attention to that department of physical science which relates to objects as co-existing in space.

What we are accustomed to term a body as if it were one, is not one in nature, but one only in relation to our inability of distinguishing the space, or, if there be in any case actual contact, the lines of contact, which separate the corpuscles, that are, on account of this inability of perception, which is relative to our weak organs, included by us in a single term, with an imaginary unity which ourselves alone have made ; and that what we term the properties of the mass,

are the properties not of one substance, but of these co-existing atoms, which are in themselves, and must always be, substances separate and independent.

What the materialist may be pleased to term the organ of thought, whether it be the whole brain and nerves, or only a part of the brain, or any other part of the corporeal frame which he may choose to consider as intelligent, is not one, then, but a multitude of particles, which exist near to each other, indeed, but which are as little one, as if they existed in the different planets of our system, or in the planets or suns of different systems. The unity which we give to the organ, by considering its separate atoms in a single glance, is a unity which it does not possess ; and we must not deceive ourselves, therefore, by imagining that we have discovered a unity which may correspond with the simplicity of our feelings, because we have discovered a number of independent corpuscles, to the multitude of which we have chosen to give a single name. An organ is not one substance, but many substances. If joy or sorrow be an affection of this organ, it is an affection of the various substances which, though distinct in their own existence, we comprehend under this single term. If the affection, therefore, be common to the whole system of particles, it is not one joy or sorrow, but a number of joys and sorrows, corresponding with the number of separate particles thus affected ; which, if matter be infinitely divisible, may be divided into an infinite number of little joys and sorrows, that have no other relation to each other in their state of infinitesimal division than the relations of proximity, by which they may be grouped together in spheres or cubes, or other solids, regular or irregular, of pleasures or pains ; but by which it is impossible for them to become one pleasure or pain, more than any particle of insentient matter can become any other particle of insentient matter, or any mass of such matter become any other mass. We

can conceive the particles of the moon to be mingled with the particles of our earth, and to cohere with them in actual contact ; but the number of particles that form the moon, cannot become the very particles that now form the earth, however intimately mingled. Each particle has still its own independent affections, and these affections of a myriad of particles are still only the affections of a myriad of particles. It is vain to say, then, in the hope of obviating this irresistible objection, from the felt unity of the being which we term self, that our thoughts and feelings are not qualities of the particles as they exist simply, but of the whole congeries of particles as existing in one beautiful piece of living mechanism ; for this is only to repeat the very difficulty itself, and to assign the insuperable difficulty as a deliverance from the insuperable difficulty. The whole of which materialists speak, whether they term it a congeries, an organ, or a system of organs, is truly nothing in itself. It is, as I have said, a mere word invented by ourselves, a name which we give to a plurality of co-existing objects, not a new object to be distinguished from the heap. A thousand atoms, near to each other or remote, are only a thousand atoms, near or remote ; and are precisely the same atoms, with precisely the same qualities, whether we consider them singly, or divide them, in our conception, by tens, fifties, hundreds, or give to the whole one comprehensive name, as if a thousand were but a greater unit. There is no principle of unity in them : it is the mind considering them, that gives to them all the unity which they have, or can have.

In considering the result of a combination of parts, we are too apt to confound the multitude of separate effects with that single great result to which we give a particular name. Thus, melody is the result of a few impulses, which a bow gives to the strings of a violin ; and we consider this melody as one effect, when in truth it is one only as a

feeling of our mind, that is simple and indivisible, not as a state of compound and divisible matter. All that is not mental, is a multitude of effects, a multitude of particles of the sounding body, of the interposed air, of the vibratory organ, alternately approaching and receding. A multitude of those was necessary, indeed, to produce in the mind, by their concurring influence, the musical delight. But each corpuscular effect may be distinguished, in our conception at least, from every other effect that co-exists with it. In the instrument, the air, the organ, the particles are all separate and independent. The material phenomenon is truly, therefore, as long as it is wholly material, a multitude of phenomena; the concurrence of a multitude of states of a multitude of particles of the musical instrument; the elastic medium; the organ of sense; the brain, without any unity whatever. The properties of the co-existing atoms, in this great whole, are the properties of the parts; and if the qualities, states, or affections of the parts were laid out of estimation, nothing would remain to be estimated as a quality, state, or affection of the whole.

The distinction which I have now made, is one with which it seems to me peculiarly important that your minds should be fully impressed; because it is to indistinct analogies of this sort, that the materialist, when he has no other retreat, is accustomed to fly for shelter. The very analogy of melody to which I have now alluded, is a favourite example. It is one effect, though resulting from the state of a number of particles; and if music flow from a material organ, it is said, why may not thought? If, indeed, what alone is properly termed music, the sensations or series of sensations that follow certain affections of the sensorial organ, that which is felt at every moment as one and indivisible, were itself one organic result, a state of the divisible organ and not of a substance that is by nature indivisible, then indeed every thought might likewise be

material. But in asserting this, the materialist begs the very point in question, assuming without proof what he yet professes to attempt to prove. It is evident, as we have seen, that what alone is one in all that multitude of effects from which melody results, the musical delight itself, is not the state of the musical instrument, nor of the vibrating air, and as little is it proved to be a state of any number of particles of the brain. It is one result, indeed, but it is one only, because it is an affection of that which is in its own nature simple; and till we arrive at the sentient principle itself, there is no unity whatever, but a multitude of states of a multitude of vibrating particles. When the materialist, then, adduces this or any other example of resulting unity, as illustrative of organic thought, all which you will find to be necessary is simply to consider what it is which is truly one, in the result that is adduced as one, and you will find in every instance that the point in dispute has been taken for granted in the example adduced to prove it,—that there is no real unity in all the material part of the process, and that the unity asserted is truly a mental unity, the unity of a mental feeling, or the unity of a mere name for expressing briefly the many co-existing states of many separate and independent particles which we have chosen to denominate a single mass.

In the Letter of the Society of Freethinkers to Martinus Scriblerus, the argument of those who consider thought as a quality of many particles is stated ludicrously indeed, but with as much real force as in the reasoning of which it is a parody.

“To the learned Inquisitor into Nature, Martinus Scriblerus, the Society of Freethinkers, greeting :

“*Grecian Coffee-House, May 7.*

“It is with unspeakable joy we have heard of your inquisitive genius, and we think it great pity that it should

not be better employed, than in looking after that theological nonentity, commonly called the Soul ; since, after all your inquiries, it will appear you have lost your labour in seeking the residence of such a chimera, that never had being but in the brains of some dreaming philosophers. Is it not Demonstration to a person of your sense, that, since you cannot find it, there is no such thing ? In order to set so hopeful a genius right in this matter, we have sent you an answer to the ill-grounded sophisms of those crack-brained fellows, and likewise an easy mechanical explication of Perception or Thinking.

“ One of their chief arguments is, that Self-consciousness cannot inhere in any system of matter, because all matter is made up of several distinct beings, which never can make up one individual thinking being.

“ This is easily answered by a familiar instance. In every jack there is a meat-roasting quality, which neither resides in the fly, nor in the weight, nor in any particular wheel of the jack, but is the result of the whole composition ; so, in an animal, the self-consciousness is not a real quality inherent in one being, (any more than meat-roasting in a jack,) but the result of several modes or qualities in the same subject. As the fly, the wheels, the chain, the weight, the cords, &c. make one jack, so the several parts of the body make one animal. As perception or consciousness is said to be inherent in this animal, so is meat-roasting said to be inherent in the jack. As sensation, reasoning, volition, memory, &c. are the several modes of thinking, so roasting of beef, roasting of mutton, roasting of pullets, geese, turkeys, &c. are the several modes of meat-roasting. And as the general quality of meat-roasting, with its several modifications as to beef, mutton, pullets, &c. does not inhere in any one part of the jack, so neither does consciousness, with its several modes of sensation, intellection, volition, &c. inhere in any one, but is the result from the mechanical composition of the whole animal.

“Just so the quality or disposition of a fiddle to play tunes, with the several modifications of this tune-playing quality in playing of preludes, sarabands, jigs, and gavotts, are as much real qualities in the instrument, as the thought or the imagination is in the mind of the person that composes them.”

“It is well known to anatomists, that the brain is a congeries of glands that separate the finer parts of the blood called animal spirits; that a gland is nothing but a canal of a great length, variously intorted and wound up together. From the arietation and motion of the spirits in those canals, proceed all the different sorts of thoughts.”

“We are so much persuaded of the truth of this our hypothesis, that we have employed one of our members, a great virtuoso at Nuremberg, to make a sort of an hydraulic engine, in which a chemical liquor resembling blood is driven through elastic channels resembling arteries and veins, by the force of an embolus like the heart, and wrought by a pneumatic machine of the nature of the lungs, with ropes, and pulleys, like the nerves, tendons, and muscles; and we are persuaded that this our artificial man will not only walk, and speak, and perform most of the outward actions of the animal life, but (being wound up once a-week) will perhaps reason as well as most of your country parsons.”¹

If, instead of asserting thought to be the result of the affection of many particles, in which case it must evidently partake the divisibility of the organ itself, and be not one but innumerable separate feelings, the materialist assert it to be the affection of a single particle, a monad, he must remember that if what he chooses to term a single particle, be a particle of matter, it too must still admit of division: it must have a top and bottom, a right side and a left; it

¹ Pope's Works, vol. v. pp. 57-61. London, 1812.

must, as is demonstrable in geometry, admit of being cut in different points, by an infinite number of straight lines; and all the difficulty of the composition of thought, therefore, remains precisely as before. If it be supposed so completely divested of all the qualities of matter, as not to be extended, nor consequently divisible, it is then mind which is asserted under another name, and every thing which is at all important in the controversy is conceded; since all which can philosophically be meant by the immaterialist, when the existence of mind is asserted by him, is the existence of an indivisible subject of all those affections which constitute the variety of our thoughts and feelings. If the materialist be unwilling to admit the word mind, in allowing the reality of a simple, unextended, and consequently indivisible subject of our various feelings, he may be allowed any other word which may appear to him preferable; even the word atom or particle, if he choose still to retain it. But he must admit, at least, that in this case, in the dissolution of the body, there is no evidence, from the analogy of this very bodily dissolution itself, of the destruction of any such simple particle as that which he finds to be necessary for the explanation of the phenomena of thought.

In whatever manner, therefore, the materialist may profess to consider thought as material, it is equally evident that his system is irreconcilable with our very notion of thought. In saying that it is material he says nothing, unless he mean that it has those properties which we regard as essential to matter; for without this belief he might as well predicate of it any barbarous term that is absolutely unintelligible, or rather might predicate of it such a barbarous term with more philosophic accuracy; since, in the one case, we should merely not know what was asserted; in the other case we should conceive erroneously that properties were affirmed of the principle of thought which were not intended to be affirmed of it.

Matter is that which resists compression, and is divisible. Mind is that which feels, remembers, compares, desires. In saying of mind that it is matter, then, we must mean, if we mean any thing, that the principle which thinks is hard and divisible; and that it will be not more absurd to speak of the twentieth part of an affirmation, or the quarter of a hope, of the top of a remembrance, and the north and east corners of a comparison, than of the twentieth part of a pound, or of the different points of the compass in reference to any part of the globe of which we may be speaking. The true answer to the statement of the materialist, the answer which we feel in our heart, on the very expression of the plurality and divisibility of feeling, is, that it assumes what, far from admitting, we cannot even understand; and that, with every effort of attention which we can give to our mental analysis, we are as incapable of forming any conception of what is meant by the quarter of a doubt, or the half of a belief, as of forming to ourselves an image of a circle without a central point, or of a square without a single angle.

With respect to this possible geometry of sensations, as divisible into parts, I cannot but think that the too great caution of Mr. Locke, by giving the sanction of his eminent name to the possibility, at least, of the superaddition of thought as a mere quality, to a system of particles, which, as a number of particles, have no thought, and yet have, as a whole, what they have not as parts of that whole, has tended in a great degree to shelter the manifest inconsistency of the doctrine of the materialist. He was unwilling to limit the divine power; and from the obscurity of our notion of the connexion of the feelings of the mind, in any manner, with the changes induced in the bodily frame, he conceived that the annexation of thought to the system of particles itself, would be but a slight addition to difficulties that must at any rate be admitted. He forgot, however, that a system of particles is but a name for the separate

particles which alone have any real existence in nature ; that the affirmation of what is contradictory, like plurality and unity, simplicity and complexity, is very different from the mere admission of ignorance ; and that, though we may not know any reason for which the Deity has been pleased, at least during our mortal state, to render sensations of our mind dependent on affections of our nervous system, there is no more absurdity in the affirmation of such a dependence, than in the assertion of any other physical connexion of events, — of material phenomena with material phenomena, or of mental phenomena with other phenomena of mind. If the presence of the moon, at the immense distance of its orbit, can affect the tendencies of the particles of water in our ocean, it may be supposed with equal readiness to produce a change in the state of any other existing substance, whether divisible into parts, that is to say, material, — or indivisible, that is to say, mind. But when thought is affirmed to be a quality of a system of particles, or to be one result of many co-existing states of particles, which separately are not thought, something more is affirmed than that of which we are merely ignorant of the reason. A whole is said to be different from all the separate and independent parts of a whole : this is one absurdity ; and that which is felt by us as in its very nature simple and indivisible, is affirmed to be only a form of that which is, by its very nature, infinitely divisible. It is no daring limitation of the divine power to suppose, that even the Omnipotent himself cannot confound the mathematical properties of squares and hexagons ; and it would be no act of irreverence to his power, though it were capable of doing every thing which is not contradictory, to suppose that he cannot give to a system of organs a quality wholly distinct from the qualities of all the separate parts ; since the organ itself is only a name which we give to those parts, that are all which truly exist as the organ, and have all an existence and qualities that are at every moment indepen-

dent of the existence and qualities of every other atom, near or remote.

Our sensations we know directly, — matter we know only indirectly, if we can be said to know its nature at all, as the cause of our sensations. It is that which, in certain circumstances, affects us in a certain manner. When we have said this, we have said all that can be considered as truly known by us with respect to it; and in saying this, it is to our own feelings that the reference is made. Of the two systems, therefore, — the system which rejects all matter, and the system which rejects all mind, — there can be no question which is the more philosophic. The materialist must take for granted every feeling for which the follower of Berkeley contends: he must admit, that it is impossible for us to know the absolute nature of matter, and that all which we can know of it is relative to ourselves, as sentient beings capable of being affected by external objects; that our sensations are known to us directly, the causes of our sensations only indirectly; and his system, therefore, even though we omit every other objection, may be reduced to this single proposition — that our feelings which we know, are the same in nature with that, of which the absolute nature, as it exists independently of our feelings, is, and must always be, completely unknown to us.

From all the remarks which have now been made, I cannot but think that it is a very logical deduction, that our feelings are states of something which is one and simple, and not of a plurality of substances, near or remote; that the principle of thought, therefore, whatever it may be, is not divisible into parts; and that hence, though it may be annihilated, as every thing which exists may be annihilated by the will of him who can destroy as he could create, it does not admit of that decay of which the body admits — a decay that is relative to the frame only, not to the elements that compose it.

When the body seems to us to perish, we know that it does not truly perish ; that every thing which existed in the decaying frame, continues to exist entire as it existed before ; and that the only change which takes place, is a change of apposition or proximity. From the first moment at which the earth arose, there is not the slightest reason to think that a single atom has perished. All that was is. And if nothing have perished in the material universe ; if even in that bodily dissolution, which alone gave occasion to the belief of our mortality as sentient beings, there is not the loss of the most inconsiderable particle of the dissolving frame, the argument of analogy, far from leading us to suppose the destruction of that spiritual being which animated the frame, would lead us to conclude that it too exists as it before existed ; and that it has only changed its relation to the particles of our material organs, as these particles still subsisting have changed the relations which they mutually bore. As the dust has only returned to the earth from which it came, it is surely a reasonable inference from analogy, to suppose that the spirit may have returned to the God who gave it.

Non secus ac quondam, tenebris et carcere rupto
Immitis caveae, volucrum regina repente
Dat plausum coelo ingentem, nubesque repente
Linqvit, et adverso defigit lumina Phoebos,
Seque auras intra liquidas et nubila condit.¹

The belief of the immateriality of the sentient and thinking principle, thus destroys the only analogy on which the supposition of the limitation of its existence to the period of our mortal life could be founded. It renders it necessary for those who would contend that we are spiritually mortal, to produce some positive evidence of a departure, in the single case of the mind, from the whole analogies of the economy of nature ; and it renders doubly strong all the

¹ Heinsius de Contemptu Mortis, lib. i.

moral arguments which can be urged for its own independent immortality.

LECTURE XXV.

OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

THE inquiry to which I directed your attention in my last Lecture, was that which relates to our prospect of immortality.

The appearances which death exhibits, seem, when we first consider them, to mark so strongly the termination of every feeling which connected us with the once living object, that the continuance of these feelings, when every external trace of them is lost, may well be supposed to be viewed with disbelief by some, and with doubt by many. During their life, our direct communication with those who lived around us, was carried on by the intervention of bodily organs; in thinking of their very feelings, we have been accustomed to think of this bodily intervention, in what they looked, or said, or did; and from the mere influence of the laws of association, therefore, it is not wonderful, that, when they can no longer look, or speak, or act, the kindness, which before could not exist without these corporeal expressions of it, should be regarded as no longer existing, at least should be so regarded by those who are not in the habit of any very nice analyses, of complicated processes or complex phenomena.

Whatever other effects death may have, it is at least evident, that when it has taken place the bodily organs moulder away, by the influence of a decomposition more or less rapid. What was once to our eyes a human being, is a human being no more; and when the organization is as

if it had never been, every feeling and thought, if states of mere organs, must be also as if they had never been. The most interesting of all questions, therefore, with respect to our hopes of immortality, is, whether thought be a state of the mere organs, which decay thus evidently before our very eyes, or a state of something which our senses, that are confined to the mere organs, cannot reach ; of something which, as it is beyond the reach of our senses, may therefore subsist as well, when every thing which comes under our senses, exists in any one state, as in any other state.

With the examination of this point, my last lecture was almost wholly occupied ; and the arguments which I then offered, seemed to me to show decisively, that our sensations, thoughts, desires, are not particles of matter, existing in any number, or any form, of mere juxtaposition ; that the sentient and thinking principle, in short, is essentially one, not extended and divisible, but incapable by its very nature of any subdivision into integral parts, and known to us only as the subject of our consciousness, in all the variety of successive feelings, which we comprehend under that single name.

When we have learned clearly to distinguish the organization from the principle of thought, the mere change of place of the particles of the organic frame, which is all that constitutes death relatively to the body, no longer seems to imply the dissolution of the principle of thought itself, which is essentially distinct from the organic frame, and, by its very nature, incapable of that species of change which the body exhibits ; since it is very evident, that what is not composed of parts, cannot, by any accident, be separated into parts.

To the mind which considers it in this view, then, death presents an aspect altogether different. Instead of the presumption, which the decaying body seemed to afford, of the cessation of every function of life, the very decay of the body affords analogies that seem to indicate the con-

tinued existence of the thinking principle ; since that which we term decay, is itself only another name of continued existence, of existence as truly continued in every thing which existed before, as if the change of mere position, which alone we term decay, had not taken place. The body, though it may seem to denote a single substance, is but a single word invented by us to express many co-existing substances : every atom of it exists after death as it existed before death ; and it would surely be a very strange error in logic to infer, from the continuance of every thing that existed in the body, the destruction of that which, by its own nature, seemed as little mortal as any of the atoms which have not ceased to exist ; and to infer this annihilation of mind, not merely without any direct proof of the annihilation, but without a single proof of destruction of any thing else, since the universe was formed. Death is a process in which every thing corporeal continues to exist ; therefore, all that is mental ceases to exist. It would not be easy to discover a link of any sort that might be supposed to connect the two propositions of so very strange an enthymeme.

The possibility of such annihilation of the mind, no one who admits the corresponding power of creation will deny, if the Deity have given any intimation, tacit or expressed, that may lead us to believe his intention of destroying the spirit, while he saves every element of the body. But the question is not, whether it be possible for him who created the mind to annihilate it ; it is, whether we have reason to believe such annihilation truly to take place ; and of this some better proof must be offered, than the continuance, even amid apparent dissolution, of all that truly constituted the body, every atom of which it was, without all question, equally possible for divine power to destroy. We surely have not proved that the whole frame of suns and planets will perish to-morrow, nor even given the slightest reason to suspect the probability of this event, because we may

have shown beyond all dispute, that the Deity may, if such be his will, reduce to-morrow, or at this very moment, the whole universe to nothing.

The very decay of the body then, as I have said, bears testimony, not to the destruction, but to the continuance of the undying spirit, if the principle of thought be truly different from the material frame. The mind is a substance distinct from the bodily organs, simple, and incapable of addition or subtraction ; Nothing which we are capable of observing in the universe has ceased to exist, since the universe began. These two propositions, as far as analogy can have weight,—and, since the mind of any one is incapable of being directly known to us as an object, it is the analogy of the bodily appearances alone that can have any weight,—these two propositions, instead of leading by inference to the proposition, The mind, which existed as a substance before death, ceases wholly to exist after death,—lead rather, as far as the mere analogy can have influence, to the opposite proposition, The mind does not perish in the dissolution of the body. In judging according to the mere light of nature, it is on the immaterialism of the thinking principle that I consider the belief of its immortality to be most reasonably founded ; since the distinct existence of a spiritual substance, if that be admitted, renders it incumbent on the assertor of the mortality of the spirit to assign some reason, which may have led the only being who has the power of annihilation, to exert his power in annihilating the mind which he is said in that case to have created only for a few years of life.

If, therefore, but for some direct divine volition, the spiritual substance, we have every reason to suppose, would continue to subsist, as every thing else continues to subsist, the only remaining question in such a case is, whether, from our knowledge of the character of the Deity, as displayed in his works, especially in the mind itself, we have reason to infer, with respect to the mind, this peculiar will

to annihilate it, — without which, we have no reason to suppose it to be the only existing thing that is every moment perishing in some individual of our kind. The likelihood of such a purpose in the Divinity may be inferred, if it can be at all inferred, in two ways—from the nature of the created mind itself, as exhibiting qualities which seem to mark it as peculiarly formed for limited existence, and from our knowledge of the Creator, as displaying to us in his works indications of such a character, as of itself might lead us to infer such a peculiar intention.

That, in the nature of the simple indivisible mind itself, there is nothing which marks it as essentially more perishable than the corpuscles to which we give the name of masses, when many of them are in close juxtaposition, but which are themselves the same, whether near or remote, than the unperishing atoms of the leaf, that continues still entire in every element, while it seems to wither before us; or of the vapour, in which all that truly existed exists as before, while it is only to our eyes that it seems to vanish into nothing, I need not use any arguments to show. Mind, indeed, like matter, is capable of existing in various states, but a change of state is not destruction in one more than in the other. It is as entire in all its seeming changes as matter in all its seeming changes. There is no positive argument, then, that can be drawn from the nature of the thinking principle, to justify the assertion, that while matter does not perish even in a single atom, it, and it only ceases to exist; and it would be enough that no positive argument could be drawn from it in support of an opinion that is inconsistent with the general analogy of nature, and unsupported by any other proof of any kind, though no negative arguments could be drawn from the same source. Every argument, however, which can be derived from it is of this negative sort, indicating in mind a nature, which of itself, if there be any difference of degree, might seem not

more but less perishable than those material atoms which are acknowledged to continue as they were, entire in all the seeming vicissitudes of the universe.

I am aware, indeed, that in judging from the mind itself, a considerable stress has often been laid on the existence of feelings which admit of a very easy solution, without the necessity of ascribing them to any instinctive foreknowledge of a state of immortal being. Of this sort, particularly, seems to me an argument which, both in ancient and modern times, has been brought forward as one of the most powerful arguments for our continued existence, after life has seemed to close upon us for ever. I allude to the universal desire of this immortal existence. But, surely, if life itself be pleasing, and even though there were no existence beyond the grave, life might still, by the benevolence of him who conferred it, have been rendered a source of pleasure, it is not wonderful that we should desire futurity, since futurity is only protracted life. It would indeed have been worthy of our astonishment, if man, loving his present life, and knowing that it was to terminate in the space of a very few years, should not have regretted the termination of what he loved, that is to say, should not have wished the continuance of it beyond the period of its melancholy close.

The universal desire, then, even if the desire were truly universal, would prove nothing but the goodness of Him who has made the realities of life, or if not the realities, the hopes of life so pleasing, that the mere loss of what is possessed or hoped, appears like a positive evil of the most afflicting kind.

Equally powerless I consider the argument for the reality of a state of higher gratification, which is often drawn from the constant renewal and constant disappointment of every earthly hope; from that eager and unremitting wish of something better, which even the possession of delights, that are counted inestimable by all but their possessor, is insufficient to suppress.

Old Rome consulted birds. Lorenzo, thou
With more success the flight of hope survey,
Of restless hope, for ever on the wing.
High-perch'd o'er every thought that falcon sits,
To fly at all that rises in her sight ;
And never stooping but to mount again,
Next moment she betrays her aim's mistake,
And owns her quarry lodged beyond the grave.¹

The mere activity of hope, however, as we thus pass ceaselessly from wishes that have been gratified to other wishes, proves only that the Deity has, with a gracious view to the advantage of society, formed us for action, and, forming us for action, has given us a principle which may urge us to new pursuits, when otherwise we might, in the idleness of enjoyment, have desisted from exertions which required to be sustained in their vigour by new desires. Though nothing were to exist beyond the grave, hope, in all its variety of objects, would still be useful for animating to continued, though varied exertion, and, as thus beneficial to the successive races of mortal beings, would have been even then a gift not unworthy of divine benevolence.

The sublime attainments which man has been capable of making in science, and the wonders of his own creative art in that magnificent scene to which he has known how to give new magnificence, have been considered by many as themselves proofs of the immortality of a being so richly endowed. When we view him, indeed, comprehending in his single conception the events of ages that have preceded him, and, not content with the past, anticipating events that are to begin, only in ages as remote in futurity as the origin of the universe is in the past, measuring the distance of the remotest planets, and naming in what year of other centuries the nations that are now gazing with astonishment on some comet are to gaze on it in its return, it is scarcely possible for us to believe that a

¹ Night Thoughts, Night vii.

mind, which seems equally capacious of what is infinite in space and time, should be only a creature, whose brief existence is measurable by a few points of space and a few moments of eternity.

Nonne hanc credideres mentem, quae nunc quoque coelum
Astraque pervolitat, delapsam coelitus, illuc
Unde abiit remeare, suasque revisere sedes ?

Look down on earth. What seest thou ? Wondrous things,
Terrestrial wonders that eclipse the skies.
What lengths of labour'd lands ! What lorded seas ;
Lorded by man, for pleasure, wealth, or war.
Seas, winds, and planets, into service brought,
His art acknowledge, and promote his ends.

Nor can the eternal rocks his will withstand.
What levell'd mountains, and what lifted vales !
O'er vales and mountains, sumptuous cities swell,
And gild our landscape with their glittering spires.
How the tall temples, as to meet their Gods,
Ascend the skies ! The proud triumphal arch
Shows us half heaven, beneath its ample bend.
High through mid air, here streams are taught to flow ;
Whole rivers there, laid by in basins, sleep :
Here plains turn oceans ; there vast oceans join,
Through kingdoms, channell'd deep from shore to shore.
How yon enormous mole, projecting, breaks
The mid-sea's furious waves ! Their roar amidst,
Out-speaks the Deity, and says, " O main,
Thus far, nor farther !" Measured are the skies, —
Stars are detected in their deep recess, —
Creation widens, vanquish'd Nature yields ;
Her secrets are extorted. Art prevails !
What monument of genius, spirit, power !
And now, if justly raptured at this scene,
Whose glories render heaven superfluous, say,
Whose footsteps these ? Immortals have been here ;
Could less than souls immortal this have done !¹

These glorious footsteps are indeed the footsteps of im-

¹ Night Thoughts, Night vi.

mortals! Yet it is not the mere splendour of the works themselves, on which this argument insists so much, that seems directly to indicate the immortality of their authors. Man might be mortal, and yet perform all these wonders, or wonders still more illustrious. It is not by considering the relation of the mind to the monuments of its art, as too excellent to be the work of a perishable being, but by considering the relations of a mind capable of these to the being who has endowed it with such capacities, and who is able to perpetuate or enlarge the capacities which he has given, that we discover in the excellence which we admire, not a proof indeed, but a presumption of immortality; a presumption, at least, which is far from leading us to infer any peculiar intention in the preserver of the body to annihilate the mind. That God has formed mankind for progressive improvement, is manifest from those susceptibilities of progress which are visible in the attainments of every individual mind; and still more in the wider contrast which the splendid results of science in whole nations, that may be considered almost as nations of philosophers, now exhibit, when we think, at the same time, of the rude arts of the savage, in his hut or in the earlier cave, in which he seemed almost of the same race with the wild animal with which he had struggled for his home. But, if God love the progress of mankind, he loves the progress of the different individuals of mankind; for mankind is but another name for these multitudes of individuals; and if he love the progress of the observers and reasoners, whom he has formed with so beautiful an arrangement of faculties, capable of adding attainment to attainment in continual progress, is it possible for us to conceive that, when the mind has made an advance which would render all future acquisitions even on earth proportionately far more easy, the very excellence of past attainments should seem a reason for suspending the progress altogether; and that he, who could have no other wish than the happiness and general excellence of man in

forming him what he is, should destroy his own gracious work, merely because man, if permitted to continue longer in being, would be more happy and excellent? If the progressive faculties of man afford no proof that the Deity wills his continued progress, they surely afford no evidence of a divine unwillingness to permit it; and we must not forget that the mind has been shown to be not more truly mortal of itself than the undecaying elements of the body; that if there be truly a substance mind, the annihilation of this substance is in itself as difficult to be conceived as the annihilation of any other substance; and that, before we believe in the miraculous exclusive annihilation of it, some reason is to be found, which might seem to influence the Deity, who spares every thing corporeal, to destroy every thing mental. We have, therefore, to conceive the mind at death matured by experience, and nobler than it was when the Deity permitted it to exist, and the Deity himself, with all those gracious feelings of love to man which the adaptation of human nature to its human scene displays; and in these very circumstances, if we affirm without any other proof the annihilation of the mind, we are to find a reason for this annihilation. If even we, in such a moment, abstracting from all selfish considerations, would feel it a sort of crime to destroy with no other view than that of the mere destruction, what was more worthy of love than in years of earlier being, are we to believe that he, who loves what is noble in man more than our frail heart can love it, will regard the improvement only as a signal of destruction? Is it not more consonant to the goodness of him who has rendered improvement progressive here, that, in separating the mind from its bodily frame, he separates it to admit it into scenes in which the progress begun on earth may be continued with increasing facility?

Quare sume animum; neque enim sapientia dia
Frustra operam impendit; neque mens aretabitur istis
Limitibus, quibus hoc perituum corpus; at exsors

Terrenae labis viget, aeternumque vigebit ;
Atque ubi corporeis emissa, ut carcere, vinclis,
Libera cognatum repetet, vetus incola, coelum,
Nectareos latices Veri de fonte perenni
Hauriet, aetheriumque perennis carpet amomum.¹

In this light, in which the Deity is considered as willing the happiness of man, and the intellectual and moral progress of man, which is surely the character that is most conspicuous in the arrangements even of this earthly life, we find in this very character, in its relation to the separated spirit, not motives to destroy, which we must presume at least that we have found, before we take for granted that what now has existence is to cease to exist ; but, on the contrary, motives to prolong an existence which as yet has fulfilled only a part of the benevolent design of creation. It may be only a slight presumption which we are hence entitled to form, but at least whatever presumption we are entitled to form, is not unfavourable to our hopes of immortality.

There is another moral character in which the Deity may be considered at such a moment — the character of justice, or at least of a moral relation analogous to that which in man we term justice. In this too may be found equal, or still stronger presumptive evidence, that the years of our earthly joy or sorrow are not the whole of our existence.

The force of the argument consists in the unequal distribution of happiness on earth, as not proportioned to the virtues or the vices of those to whom it is given.

Virtue, indeed, cannot be very miserable, and Vice cannot permanently be very happy. But the virtuous may have sorrows, from which the vicious are free, and the vicious have enjoyments not directly accompanied with vice, — enjoyments which the virtuous, who seem to us to merit them better, do not possess. Increase of guilt, even

¹ I. Hawkins Browne.

by stupifying the conscience, may occasion less rather than more remorse ; and the atrocious profligate be less miserable than the timid and almost penitent victim of passions, which overpower a reluctance that is sincere, even when it is too feeble to make adequate resistance to the overwhelming force. It is to futurity, therefore, that we must look for the equalizing, if any equalizing there be, of the present disproportions.

I am aware of an argument which may be adduced to obviate the force of the reasoning that is founded on the prospect of such moral retribution. If, in the present state of things, the virtuous are rewarded, and the vicious punished, we do not need a future state for doing what has been done already ; and if the virtuous are not rewarded, nor the vicious punished, in that only scene of which we have any experience, what title have we to infer, from this very disorder, qualities in the Supreme Ruler of the world, which the present scene of his government does not itself display ?

The argument would indeed be, I will readily admit, most forcible, if we had no mode of discovering the moral sentiments of the Sovereign of nature, unless in the pain or pleasure which he bestows ; and if no advantages were to flow from the unequal distribution of happiness on earth, that could reconcile these with a high moral character of the Governor of the universe. But, if such advantages do truly arise from the temporary disproportion as compensated afterwards by the distributions of another life, and if the moral character of God be discoverable by us in other ways, the argument which supposes us to have no other mode of inferring the divine character than by the mere distribution of pleasure and pain, must lose its weight. If the temporary disproportion be of advantage upon the whole, he who is benevolent cannot fail to will that very disproportion, which is thus by supposition advantageous ; and he who has all the sources of happiness in his power,

through every future age, can have no difficulty in accommodating a little temporary and necessary disproportion to justice the most exact. These important points will deserve a little fuller elucidation.

In the first place, then, the moral sentiments of the Ruler and Judge of the world are discoverable in other ways, as well as by the temporary allotments which he has made of pain or pleasure. He who has placed conscience in every bosom, to approve or condemn, speaks to every one in that voice of conscience. What every human being is forced to detest, cannot be regarded by us as indifferent to him who has rendered hatred of it inevitable in us. What every bosom is taught, as if by some internal awarder of love, to regard with veneration, must be regarded too as acceptable in the eyes of him who has made us feel it as a species of crime to withhold our love. God, then, approves of virtue ; he loves the virtuous ; he has the power of giving happiness to those whom he wills to render happy ; and if, having this power, he do not make happy for the few moments of life those whom we cannot but consider him as loving, it must be for a reason which is itself a reason of benevolence.

Such a reason, I may remark, in the second place, is easily discoverable, and indeed has been already treated by me at such great length, as to render it unnecessary for me now to dwell on it. If the virtuous were necessarily happy here, and happy in proportion to their virtue, there could not be those noble lessons by which occasional suffering strengthens the virtue which it exercises. There could not, for the same reason, be those gentle services of compassion which cherish virtues of another class. If the guilty were the only sufferers, pity would be feeble, and might even perhaps be morally unsuitable in some measure, rather than praiseworthy. In the case of vice itself, we see a reason, and a most benevolent reason, why the pain of remorse should often be more severe, in the slighter delinquencies of

those who are only novices in guilt, than in the fearless cruelties and frauds of the hardened and impenitent sinner. It is in the early stages of vice, before the influence of habit is formed, that the heart may be most easily led back to better feelings; and it is then, accordingly, when it may be most efficacious, that the voice which calls to desist, speaks with its loudest expostulations and warnings.

The present system of temporary disproportion, then, is not, when the general character of the divine estimator of human actions is sufficiently marked in another manner, inconsistent in the slightest degree with supreme moral excellence; but, on the contrary, when all its relations, especially those most important relations to the virtue that is awakened by it and fostered, are taken into account, may be said to flow from that very excellence. But still, important as the temporary advantages may be, for producing that consciousness of virtue which could not be known without opportunities of trial, and the very virtues themselves that imply sufferings which are not the necessary result of guilt, it is only by its relation to the moral advantage, that the disproportion is even at present reconcilable with the justice and goodness which we delight to contemplate in our Maker, and Preserver, and Judge. That conscience which he has placed within us, as if to bear his own authority, and to prompt us as his own benevolence would prompt us, to the actions which it may be as delightful to remember as to perform; that very distinguisher of good and evil, by which, and by which only, we learn to love even the benevolence which formed us; the benevolence, to whose just and bounteous regard we look with confidence through all the ages of eternity; this principle of all equity, by which alone we know to be just ourselves, and to reproach ourselves for any failure in justice, seems, in the very language with which it calls on us to make compensation for our own disproportionate awards, to reveal to us the compensations of another world, as flowing necessarily

from the very goodness and power of him, to whose comprehensive and equal view of all the ages of the universe, and of all that, in those ages, is to be felt or done, futurity itself may almost be said to be constantly present. The distinction of life and death at least, which to our eye is so important, is to him but the distinction of a moment; and if that brief moment of mortal life, though it be a moment of suffering, can give to the immortal spirit everlasting remembrances of virtue, he who makes it, for important purposes, a moment of suffering, can assign to the sufferer that immortality, to which the remembrance of the heroic disregard of peril, or of the equally heroic patience that disdained to repine even in torture itself, may be a source of happiness, which, in such circumstances, it would not have been benevolence to have withheld.

These considerations of the Deity, as manifestly willing the intellectual and moral progress of his creatures, which death suspends, and as a just estimator of the actions of mankind, whose awards may be considered as proportioned to the excellence which he loves, — these two views of the relation of man and his Creator, might lead us to some presumptive expectation of future existence, even though we had no positive proof of any spiritual substance within us, that might remain entire, in the mere change of place of the bodily elements; a change which is the only bodily change in that death which we are accustomed to regard as if it were a cessation of existence, but in which every thing that existed before, continues to exist with as perfect physical integrity as it before existed.

Even in this view of man, his future existence as a living being, though not so obvious and easy of conception, might still seem a reasonable inference from the character of the Divinity, in its relation to the earthly progress and earthly sufferings of a creature whom it would be impossible for us to regard as an object of indifference to the Power that marked him out for our own admiration. But, in this view,

the argument for immortality would be comparatively feeble. We are not to forget, as I have already repeated, that mind is itself a substance distinct from the bodily elements; that when death itself is only a change of the mutual relations of atoms, all of which exist as before, with all their qualities, there is no reason of analogy that can lead us to suppose the mind, as a substance, to be the only thing which perishes; that in such a case, therefore, positive evidence is necessary, not to make us believe the continued existence of the mind, when nothing else is perishing, but to make us believe that the Deity, who destroys nothing else, in death destroys those very minds, without relation to which the whole material frame of the universe, though it were to subsist for ever, would be absolutely void of value. It would not be a little, then, to find merely that there is no positive evidence which can lead us to suppose such exclusive annihilation of spiritual existence. But how much more is it to find, instead of such positive evidence of destruction, presumptions of the strongest kind, which the character of the Deity, as made known to us in his works, and especially in our hearts, can afford, that the life which depended on his goodness on earth, will be a subject of the moral dispensations of his goodness and justice, after all that is truly mortal about us has not perished indeed, but entered into new forms of elementary combination. “Cum venerit dies ille qui mixtum hoc divini humanique secernat corpus, hoc, ubi inveni relinquam : ipse me diis reddam. Nec nunc sine illis sum; sed gravi terrenoque detineor. Per has mortalis aevi moras, illi meliori vitae longiorique proluditur. Quemadmodum novem mensibus nos tenet maternus uterus, et praeparat non sibi sed illi loco in quem videmur emitti, jam idonei spiritum trahere, et in aperto durare; sic per hoc spatium, quod ab infantia patet in senectutem, in alium maturescimus partum. Alia origo nos expectat, alius rerum status. Nondum coelum nisi ex intervallo pati possumus.

Quicquid circa te jacet rerum, tanquam hospitalis loci sarcinas specta: transeundum est. Executit redeuntem natura, sicut intrantem. Dies iste, quem tanquam extremum reformidas, aeterni natalis est."¹

The day which we falsely dread as our last, is indeed the day of our better nativity. We are maturing on earth for heaven; and even on earth, in those noble studies which seem so little proportioned to the wants of this petty scene, and suited rather to that state of freedom in which we may conceive our spirit to exist when delivered from those bodily fetters which confine it to so small a part of this narrow globe, there are presages of the diviner delights that await us, — marks of that noble origin from which the spirit was derived. These indications of its celestial origin are beautifully compared by Heinsius, in his very pleasing poem, *De Contemptu Mortis*, to the gleams of the spirit of other years with which a gallant courser, condemned to the drudgery of the plough, seems still to show that it was formed for a nobler office.

Ut cum fortis equus Pisaeae victor olivae,
Aut quem sanguineus saeva ad certamina Mavors
Deposcit, fremitusque virum, lituosque tubasque,
Nunc misero datus agricolae, pede creber inertem
Pulsat humum, patriamque domum testatur et ignem
Naribus, et curvum collo aversatur aratrum.²

The continuance of our existence, in the ages that follow the few years of our earthly life, is not to be regarded only in relation to those ages. Even in these few years which we spend on earth, comparatively insignificant as they may seem when we think at the same time of immortality, it is, to him who truly looks forward to the immortality, as that for which human life is only a preparation, the chief source of delight, or of comfort, in occasional afflictions. If this life were indeed all, the sight of a single victim of oppres-

¹ Seneca, *Epist. cii.*

² *Liber ii.*

sion would be to us the most painful of all objects, except the sight of the oppressor himself; and though we might see sufficient proofs of goodness, to love Him by whom we were made, the goodness would, at the same time, appear to us too capricious in many instances, to allow us to rest on it with the confidence which it is now so delightful to us to feel, when we think of Him in whom we confide. In the sure prospect of futurity, we see that unalterable relation, with which God and virtue are for ever connected, —the victim of oppression, who is the sufferer, and scarcely the sufferer, of a few moments here, is the rejoicer of endless ages; and all those little evils which otherwise would be so great to us, seem scarcely worthy even of our regret. We feel that it would be almost as absurd, or even more absurd, to lament over them and repine, as it would be to lament, if we were admitted to the most magnificent spectacle which human eyes had ever beheld, that some few of the crowd through which we passed had slightly pressed against us, on our entrance.

All now is vanish'd. Virtue sole survives
Immortal, never-failing friend to man,
His guide to happiness on high. And see,
'Tis come, the glorious morn, the second birth
Of heaven and earth. Awakening Nature hears
The new-creating word, and starts to life
In every heighten'd form, from pain and death
For ever free. The great eternal scheme,
Involving all, and in a perfect whole
Uniting, as the prospect wider spreads,
To Reason's eye refined clears up apace.
Ye vainly wise, ye blind presumptuous, now
Confounded in the dust, adore that power
And wisdom oft arraign'd: see now the cause
Why unassuming worth in secret lived
And died neglected; why the good man's share
In life was gall and bitterness of soul;
Why the lone widow and her orphans pined
In starving solitude, while luxury

In palaces lay straining her low thought
To form unreal wants : why heaven-born truth,
And moderation fair, wore the red marks
Of superstition's scourge. Ye good distress'd,
Ye noble few, who here unbending stand
Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up a while,
And what your bounded view, which only saw
A little part, deem'd evil, is no more.
The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,
And one unbounded Spring encircle all.¹

LECTURE XXVI.

RETROSPECT OF THE ARGUMENT FOR THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL ;
OF OUR DUTY TO OURSELVES.

My last two Lectures have been devoted to the very interesting inquiry into the grounds which reason, without the aid of revelation, affords, for our belief of the immortality of the sentient and thinking principle, — of that principle which is the life of our mortal frame, but which survives the dissolution of the frame which it animated. The importance of the subject will justify, or rather demand, a short retrospect of the general argument.

It is from the dissolution of the body that the presumption as to the complete mortality of our nature is derived ; and it was therefore necessary, in the first place, to consider the force of this presumption as founded on the organic decay. If thought be only a state of those seemingly contiguous particles which we term organs, the separation of these particles may be the destruction of the thought ; but if our sensations, thoughts, emotions, be states of a substance

¹ Thomson's Seasons ; conclusion of Winter.

which itself exists independently of the particles, that by their juxtaposition obtain the name of organs, the separation of these particles to a greater distance from each other, (which is all the bodily change that truly takes place in death,) or even the destruction of these particles, if what we term decay, instead of being a mere form of continued existence, were absolute destruction, would not involve, though it might or might not be accompanied by the annihilation of the separate principle of thought.

The result of this primary and most important examination was, that far from being a state of any number of particles, arranged together in any form, thought cannot even be conceived by us to be a quality of number or extension ; that it is of its very essence not to be divisible ; and that the top or bottom of a sentiment, or the half or quarter of a truth or falsehood, or of a joy or sorrow, are at least as absurd to our conception as the loudness of the smell of a rose, or the scarlet colour of the sound of a trumpet.

An organ is not one substance, because we term it one. It is truly a multitude of bodies, the existence and qualities of each of which are independent of the existence and qualities of all the others ; as truly independent as if, instead of being near to each other, they were removed to distances relatively as great as those of the planets, or to any other conceivable distances in the whole immensity of space. If any one were to say, the Sun has no thought ; Mercury, Venus, the Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and all their secondaries, have no thought ; but the solar system has thought, — we should then scarcely hesitate a single moment in rejecting such a doctrine ; because we should feel instantly that there could be no charm in the two words solar system, which are of our own invention, to confer on the separate masses of the heavenly bodies what, under a different form of mere verbal expression, they had been declared previously not to possess. What the sun and

planets have not, the solar system, which is nothing more than that sun and planets, has not; or, if so much power be ascribed to the mere invention of a term, as to suppose that we can confer by it new qualities on things, there is a realism in philosophy far more monstrous than any which prevailed in the logic of the schools.

If, then, the solar system cannot have properties which the sun and planets have not, and if this be equally true, at whatever distance, near or remote, they may exist in space, it is surely equally evident that an organ,—which is only a name for a number of separate corpuscles, as the solar system is only a name for a number of larger masses of corpuscles, — cannot have any properties which are not possessed by the corpuscles themselves, at the very moment at which the organ as a whole is said to possess them; nor any affections as a whole, additional to the affections of the separate parts. An organ is nothing, the corpuscles to which we give that single name are all; and if a sensation be an organic state, it is a state of many corpuscles, which have no more unity than the greater number of particles in the multitudes of brains which form the sensations of all mankind. Any one of the particles in any brain has an existence as complete in itself, and as independent of the existence of the other particles of the same brain, which are a little nearer it, as of the particles of other brains, which are at a greater distance. Even though it were admitted, however, in opposition to one of the clearest truths in science, that an organ is something more than a mere name for the separate and independent bodies which it denotes, and that our various feelings are states of the sensorial organ, it must still be allowed, that, if two hundred particles existing in a certain state form a doubt, the division of these into two equal aggregates of the particles, as they exist in this state at the moment of that particular feeling, would form halves of a doubt; that all the truths of arithmetic would be predicable of each separate thought,

if it were a state of a number of particles: and the truths of geometry be in like manner predicable of it, if it depended on extension and form. In short, if joy or sorrow, simple and indivisible as they are felt by us to be, be not one, but a number of corpuscles separate and divisible into an infinite number of little joys and sorrows, that may be variously arranged in spheres and parallelopipeds, any thing may, with equal probability, be said to be any thing, however apparently opposite and contradictory.

When sensation is said to be the result of organization, the vagueness of the term result throws a sort of illusive obscurity over the supposed process, and we more readily admit the assertion with the meaning which the materialist would give to it; because, however false it may be in his sense, it is true in another sense. Sensation is the result of organization, — a result, however, not in the organs themselves, but in a substance of which the Deity has so arranged the susceptibilities, as to render the variety of that class of feelings which we term sensations, the effects of certain states of the particles which compose the organ. The result, therefore, is one and simple, because the mind, that alone is susceptible of the state which we term sensation, is one and simple, though the bodily particles of the state of which the one sensation is the result are many. A sound, for example, is one, because it is an affection of the mind which has no parts, and must always be one in all its states, though the mental affection may have required, before it could take place, innumerable motions of innumerable vibratory particles, which have no unity but in their joint relation to the mind, that considers them as one, and is affected by their concurring vibrations. In like manner, in the phenomena of chemical agency, to which the phenomena of thought and feeling, as simple results, are by the materialists most strangely asserted to be analogous, it surely requires no very subtle discernment to perceive, that, though we may speak of the result of certain

mixtures, as if the result were one of simple combustion, deflagration, solution, precipitation, and the various other terms which are used to denote chemical changes, it is in the single word alone, that all the unity of the complex phenomenon is to be found, — that the solution of salt in water, or the combustion of charcoal in atmospheric air, expresses not one fact, but as many separate facts as there are separate particles dissolved or burnt ; — that the unity, in short, is not in the chemical phenomena as facts, but in the mind, and only in the mind, which considers all these facts together ; and that the mere words combustion and solution either signify nothing, or signify states of innumerable particles, which are not the less innumerable because they are comprehended in a single word.

Sensation, then, which is not more truly felt by us in any case, as a pleasure or a pain, than it is felt to be one and incapable of division, is not a state of many particles, which would be as many separate selves, without any connecting principle that could give them unity, but a state of a single substance, which we term mind, when we speak of it generally, or self, when we speak of it with reference to its own peculiar series of feelings.

There is mind, then, as well as matter, or rather, if there be a difference of the degrees of evidence, there is mind more surely than there is matter ; and if at death not a single atom of the body perishes, but that which we term dissolution, decay, putrefaction, is only a change of the relative positions of those atoms, which in themselves continue to exist with all the qualities which they before possessed, there is surely no reason, from this mere change of place of the atoms that formed the body, to infer, with respect to the independent mind, any other change than that of its mere relation to those separated atoms. The continued subsistence of every thing corporeal cannot, at least, be regarded as indicative of the annihilation of the

other substance, but must, on the contrary, as far as the mere analogy of the body is of any weight, be regarded as a presumption in favour of the continued subsistence of the mind, when there is nothing around it which has perished, and nothing even which has perished, in the whole material universe, since the universe itself was called into being.

The Deity, however, though he have not chosen to annihilate a single atom of matter, since he created the world, may, it will be admitted, have chosen to annihilate every spiritual substance. But with the strong analogy of matter, which is the only substance that is capable of being perceived by us, in favour of the continued existence of the mind, it would be necessary, for the proof of the supposed spiritual mortality, to show some reason which may be believed to have influenced the Supreme Being to this exclusive annihilation. The assertor of the soul's immortality, — if the existence of the soul as a separate substance be previously demonstrated, — has not so much to assign reasons for the belief of its immortality, as to obviate objections which may be urged against that belief. At the moment of death there exists the spirit; there exist also the corporeal atoms. At that moment, the Deity allows every atom to subsist as before. The spirit, too, if he do not annihilate it, will subsist as before. If we suppose him to annihilate it, we must suppose him to have some reason for annihilating it. Is any such reason imaginable, either in the nature of the spirit itself, or in the character of the Deity?

Instead of any such reason for annihilation, that might be supposed to justify the assertion of it, we found, on the contrary, reasons which might of themselves lead us to expect the continued existence, far more probably than the destruction of the soul. If the Deity will, as it is evident from the whole frame of our minds that he most truly wills, the progress of mankind, he must will the progress of the

individuals of mankind ; since mankind is but a name for the individuals who compose it ; and if he will the progress of individuals, there can be no reason that he should love that progress less, when the individual is capable of making greater advances, and that, merely on account of that greater capacity, he should destroy what he sustained with so much care for that partial progress which he now delights to suspend. In the state of the spirit, then, at the moment of death, there is nothing which seems to mark it out for exclusive annihilation.

Are we to find a reason for this, then, in the character of the Deity himself? On the contrary, would not his annihilation of the soul, when every motive for continuing its existence, as far as we may presume to think of the motives of the Deity, in accordance with the general design exhibited by him, in the more obvious appearances of the universe, seems rather stronger than weaker, imply a sort of capricious inconsistency in the divine character which the beautiful regularity of his government of the world leaves us no room to infer? Nay, more, may we not almost venture to say, that a future state of retribution is revealed to us in those divine perfections which the universe so manifestly exhibits, and in those moral feelings which are ever present to our heart? Every seeming irregularity in the sufferings of the good, and in the unequal distribution of happiness, admits, in this way, of being reconciled with those high moral perfections which the voice of conscience within us, by its uniform approbation of virtue and disapprobation of vice, proclaims to belong to Him who has made it a part of our very nature thus to condemn and approve. The temporary inequalities are, in the meantime, evidently of moral advantage. But still, these supposed irregularities of suffering and enjoyment, though in the highest degree useful, as we found, for the production and fostering of virtue, and of all the delights of conscience which may attend the virtuous through immortality, and

therefore justly a part of the benevolent dispensations of God on earth, are reconcilable with his moral perfections, only by the immortality of the spirit, which, after suffering what virtue can suffer for a few years of life, may rejoice for ever in the presence of that God, in devout submission to whose will, what the world counted suffering was scarcely what required an act of fortitude to endure it.

In whatever light, then, at the moment of death, we consider either the soul itself or its Creator, we discover reasons rather of continuing its existence than of annihilating it. The evidence of this sort may be strong, or it may be weak ; but, weak or strong, it is at least favourable to the affirmative side of the question. We have not merely, then, the powerful presumption, for the continued existence of the spirit, which arises from the continuance, even in what we term decay, of every thing corporeal ; but we have, to strengthen this presumption still more, every argument which can be drawn from our knowledge of the divine character, to which alone we are to look for the evidence of His intention to annihilate or preserve, as we have seen, from the inadequacy of mere matter to account for the phenomena of thought. If there be a spiritual substance existing at the moment of death, which would continue to subsist but for the divine will, which alone can annihilate, as it alone can create, we find not merely that it is impossible to assign any positive reason, which may be supposed to influence the Deity to annihilate what he had formed, but that there are positive reasons which might lead us to expect his continued preservation of it. We have, in short, for the immortality of the soul, from the mere light of nature, I will not say evidence that is demonstrative and irresistible, for that was left to be revealed to us by a more cloudless light, but at least as strong a combination of presumptive evidence, negative and positive, as we can imagine such a subject, in the obscurity of human reason, to possess.

The objections sometimes urged against the immortality of the thinking principle, from the influence of disease, or of age, which is indeed itself a species of disease, but an incurable one, on the mental faculties, are of no force when urged against the system of those who admit the existence both of matter and mind, and the connexion which the Deity has in so many relations established, of our bodily and mental part. Our sensations are as much states of the mind, as any other of our mental affections. That the slightest puncture of our cuticle by the point of a pin, or the application of a few acrid particles to our nostrils, should alter completely, for the time, the state of the thinking principle, might as well be urged in disproof of the immortality of the soul, as the same sort of connexion of mind and body which the imbecility of disease exhibits. If the nervous system were to continue long in precisely the same state as that which is produced by the puncture of a pin, it is evident that the mind would be as little capable of reflection as in dotage or madness; and in dotage or madness, the nervous system is not disordered for a few moments, but continues to exist in a certain state for a length of time, with which, of course, during that length of time, the state of the mind continues to correspond. If the momentary nervous affection arising from the puncture, then, be no proof of the soul's mortality, and prove only its susceptibility of being affected by the body to which its Creator has united it, I do not see how the more lasting influence of the more lasting nervous affection can be a proof of any thing more. "Suppose a person," says Cicero, "to have been educated from infancy in a chamber, in which he could see objects only through a small chink in the window-shutter, would he not be apt to consider this chink as essential to his vision, and would it not be difficult to persuade him, that his prospect would be enlarged by the demolition of the walls of his temporary

prison?" In such a case as that which Cicero has supposed, if the analogy may be extended to the present objection, it is evident, at least, that, if the aperture were closed for years, or if the light transmitted through it, for the same length of time, were merely altered in tint, by the interposition of some coloured transparent body, these changes would as little imply any blindness or defect of vision, as if the darkening or tinging of the light in its passage through the aperture had occurred only for a few moments. The longest continued disorder of the nervous system then, I repeat, whatever corresponding mental affections it may induce, proves nothing more with respect either to the mortality or the immortality of the sentient and thinking principle, than the shorter affection of the nerves and brain, which is followed in any of our momentary sensations by its corresponding mental change. If the mind were, during our earthly existence, absolutely independent of the body during its union with it, it would indeed be wonderful that any bodily disease should be found to affect it; but if it have susceptibilities of affection that are, in many respects, accommodated to certain states of the bodily organs, the real wonder would be, if a disordered state of the bodily organs were not followed by any corresponding change in the state or affections of the mind.

The result of this long disquisition will, I hope, be a deeper conviction in your minds of the force of the evidence, which even human reason affords, of the great truth for which I have contended. "*Quicquid est illud, quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vult, quod viget, coeleste et divinum est,*" says Cicero, "*ob eamque rem aeternum sit necesse est.*" It is of celestial origin, he says, because in its remembrance of the past, and foresight of the future, and wide comprehension of the present, there are characters of the divinity, which nothing that is of the gross mixture of earth can partake.

“*Hinc sese*,” says the author of one of the noblest modern Latin poems on this noble subject, *De Immortalitate Animi*,

*Hinc sese in vita supra sortemque situmque
Evehit humanum ; nunc coelo devocat astra,
Intima nunc terrae reserat penetralia victrix ;
Quaeque oculos fugiunt tenuissima corpora promit
In lucem, panditque novi miracula mundi.
Ecquid enim per se pollet magis, aut magis haustus
Indicat aethereos, genus et divinitus ortum ?
Atque adeo dum corporis stant foedera nexus,
Exit saepe foras tamen, effugioque parat se ;
Ac veluti terrarum hospes, non incola, sursum
Fertur, et ad patrios gestit remeare penates.¹*

After these observations on the doctrines of natural theology, with respect to the being and perfections of God, the services of duty which it is not so much the obligation as it is the privilege and highest glory of our nature to pay, in the devotion of our heart, to a Being so transcendent, and the prospect of that immortal existence in which, after the scene of earthly things is closed upon our view, we are still to continue under the guardianship of the same provident goodness which sustained us during the years that are termed by us our life, as if exclusively constituting it, though they are only the infancy, as it were, or the first few moments of a life that is everlasting ; I return now to the only subdivision of our moral conduct which remained to be considered by us, that which relates immediately to our own welfare, the duty, as it has been termed, which we owe to ourselves. The phrase is not a very happy one ; but it is sufficiently expressive of that direct relation to self, which is all that is meant to be understood in the conduct to which the phrase is applied. The consideration of this, you will remember, I postponed, till we had considered those doctrines of religion to which,

¹ I. Hawkins Browne.

in their relation to our happiness, and in a great measure to our virtue also, this part of our moral conduct particularly refers.

Our duty to ourselves, to retain then the common form of expression, may be considered in two lights, as it relates to the cultivation of our moral excellence, and to the cultivation of our happiness, in the sense in which that term is commonly understood, as significant of continued enjoyment, whatever the source of the enjoyment may be. It may be thought, indeed, that these two views exactly coincide; but though it is certain that even on earth they usually coincide, and must coincide still more exactly when our immortal existence is considered, they are yet, in reference to our will or moral choice, distinct objects. We will to be virtuous, not because virtue is productive of most happiness, and is recognised by us as its purest and most permanent source, but without any view at the moment to that happiness, and simply with a view to the moral excellence, without which we should feel ourselves unworthy, not of happiness merely, which we value much, but of our own self-esteem and of the approbation of God, which we value more. The attachment of happiness to the fulfilment of duty, arises only from the gratuitous goodness of Heaven. The same benevolent Being who has made it delightful to us to give and to have given relief, has placed in our bosom a principle of compassion that is of earlier operation; by which we hasten to relieve, and have already perhaps given the relief, before we have paused to think of the delight which the generous feel. It is the same in our contemplation of every duty. We have already desired to be what we can esteem, before we have thought of any thing more in the particular case, than of the duty and of the esteem itself. The happiness may, indeed, follow the desire of moral excellence, but the happiness was not the object of thought at the very moment when the moral excellence was desired. He who counts only the pleasure

which the offices of virtue are to yield, and who acts as virtue orders, therefore, only because vice does not offer to her followers so rich a salary, is unworthy, I will not say merely of being a follower of virtue, but even of that pleasure which virtue truly gives only to those who think less of the pleasure than of the duty which the pleasure attends. "What calculation," says Seneca, "is so basely sordid as that which computes the price at which it may be advantageous to be a good man? — *Inveniuntur qui honesta in mercedem colant, quibusque non placet virtus gratuita; quae nihil habet in se magnificum, si quidquam venale. Quid enim est turpius, quam aliquem computare, quanti vir bonus sit?*"¹

The duty which consists in the desire of rendering ourselves morally more excellent, and the cultivation, accordingly, of all those affections which render us more benevolent to others, and more firm in that heroic self-command which resists alike the influence of pleasure and of pain, is then, in its direct object, different from that other branch of the duty to ourselves which regards our happiness as its immediate end. It is unnecessary, however, to enlarge on the former of these, since the desire of our moral excellence is the desire of excellence in all those virtues which have been already under our review. It would be needless, therefore, to repeat, in any minute detail, with respect to the mere desire of cultivating these virtues, remarks which have been anticipated in treating of the virtues themselves. The only observations which it is still of importance to make, relate to the effect which every separate breach of duty may have in lessening the tendency to virtue, and, consequently, in derogating from the general excellence of the moral character. It thus acquires a sort of double delinquency; first, as a breach of some particular duty; and, secondly, as an additional breach of that duty, which

¹ *De Beneficiis*, lib. iv. cap. i.

should lead us to confirm our moral excellence as much as possible, by every act of virtue which the circumstances of our situation will allow us to perform ; and, at least, by abstinence from vice in situations in which no opportunity of positive virtue is allowed to us.

It is this relation of present actions to the future character, indeed, which forms, to the reflecting mind, the chief element in its moral consideration of far the greater part of human conduct, — of all that part of it which comprehends the little actions of ordinary life. It is but rarely that we are assailed with temptations to great evil ; and when we are so assailed, the evil itself, and the seductive circumstances that would tempt us to it, are too prominent and powerful not to absorb the whole attention of the mind, distracting it in a sort of conflict, or hurrying it along, according to the force of the moral hatred of guilt that overcomes or is overcome. In such cases, then, we think of the present, and scarcely of more than of the present. But how few are the cases of this kind, and how much more frequently are we called to the performance of actions in which, if the circumstances of the particular moment alone be considered, the virtue has little merit, or the vice little delinquency. It is of many such little delinquencies, however, that the guilt is ultimately formed, which is afterwards to excite the indignant wrath of every breast, except of that one in which the horrors of remorse, stilled, perhaps, in the dreadful moments of active iniquity, are all that is to be felt in the still more dreadful intervals from crime to crime. It is not of base perfidy, then, nor of atrocious cruelty, that it is necessary to bid the ingenuous mind beware, but of offences, in which that ingenuous mind, untaught as yet to discern the future in the present, sees only the little frailties that, as proofs of a common nature, are pitied by those who contemplate them, rather than condemned ; and attract, perhaps, in this very pity, an interest which is more akin to love than to hate. It is in

these circumstances only, or at least chiefly in these circumstances, that the moral character is in peril. There is not a guilty passion from which the heart would not shrink, if that passion were to present itself instantly, with its own dreadful aspect. But while the pleasures and the less hideous forms of vice mingle together, in what may almost be termed the sport or pastime of human life, we pass readily and heedlessly from one to the other, till we learn at last to look on the passion, when it introduces itself among the playful band, only as we gaze on some fierce masquer in a pageant that assumes features of darker ferocity only to delight us the more, or which we approach at least with as little apprehension as if it were the gentle form of Virtue herself that was smiling on us. It is from the beginnings of vice that we are to be saved, then, if we are to be saved from vice itself. Were it given to us to picture the future, as we can paint what is before our eyes; and could we show to the boy, as he returns blooming and scarcely fatigued, from the race or other active game in which he has been contending with his playmates, some form of feeble age, the few gray hairs, the wrinkled front, the dim eye, the withered cheek, the wasted limbs, that cannot bear, without additional support, even that thin frame which bends over them to the earth that is soon to receive all that is not yet wholly dead and consumed in the half-living skeleton; could we say to him, as he gazes almost with terror on this mixed semblance of death and life, The form on which you are now looking is your own, —how incredulous would be his little heart to our prophetic intimation! It would seem to him scarcely possible that any number of years should convert what he then felt and saw in his own vigorous frame, into that scarcely breathing thing of feebleness and misery, which, when a few of those years had passed over him, he was truly to become. It would be the same with the moral futurity as with that of the mere animal being. Could we foresee and

exhibit, in like manner, the future heart ; could we show to him who has dormant passions, that have not yet been awakened by any temptation, and who is, therefore, full of the confidence of virtue,—to him who loves, perhaps, the happiness of others, which has never interfered with his own, and is eager, therefore, to confer on them all those enjoyments which cost no sacrifice of enjoyment on his part ; to such a mind, and, in some cases, even to a mind far nobler, could we present the moral picture of some deceiver, and plunderer, and oppressor, some reveller in the luxury of riches fraudulently usurped, and even of the scanty rapine of poverty itself, that had still something which could be torn from it by exactions, which it was too friendless to know how to resist ; and, in presenting this picture, could we say, The guilt at which you shudder, is the guilt of the very bosom that is shrinking from it with indignation,—how difficult would it be, or rather how impossible, to convince the criminal of other years, of his own horrible identity with all the villanies which he loathed. Yet there can be no question that there are cases in which the moral progression is as regular, from innocence to mature and hoary iniquity, as the mere corporeal progress, from the beauty and muscular alacrity of youth, to the weakness and pale and withered emaciation of age.

It is the knowledge of this fatal progression, then, from less to greater vice, which far more than doubles the obligation of abstaining from those slight immoralities, which might seem trifling if it were not for this progressive tendency. No evil is slight which prepares the heart for greater evil. The highest duty which we owe to ourselves, is to strengthen, as much as it is in our power to strengthen, every disposition which constitutes or forms a part of moral excellence ; and we err against this high duty, and prepare ourselves for erring against every other duty, as often as we yield to a single seduction, whether it be to do what is

positively unworthy, or to abstain from the humblest act of virtue which our duty calls to us to perform. In yielding once to any vicious desire, we lose much more than the virtue of a single moment ; for while the desire, whatever it may be, is increased by indulgence, the mere remembrance that we have once yielded, is to us almost like a license to yield again. The second error seems to save us from the pain of thinking, that the temptation which we before suffered to vanquish our feeble virtue, was one which even that feeble virtue was capable of overcoming ; and our present weakness is to us as it were a sort of indistinct and secret justification of the past.

The virtuous man, then, who loves as he should love the noble consciousness of virtue, and who feels, therefore, that no gain of mere sensual pleasure or worldly honour would be cheaply purchased by a sacrifice of moral excellence, will think often, when such a purchase might be made by a sacrifice so slight, that to others it might seem scarcely a diminution of virtue, rather of the whole moral excellence which he endangers, than of the little portion of it with which he is called to part. He will not say within himself, how inconsiderable and how venial would be this error ; but, to what crimes may this single error lead ! He will thus be saved from the common temptations, by which minds less accustomed to a sage foresight are at first gently led where they gladly consent to go, and afterwards hurried along where it is misery to follow, by a force which they cannot resist,—by a force which seemed to them at first the light touch of the gentle hand of a grace or a pleasure, but which has expanded progressively at every step, till it has become the grasp of a giant's arm.

The duty that is exercised in resisting the solicitations of evils that can scarcely be said to be yet vices, though they are soon to become vices, and are as yet, to our unreflecting thought, only forms of gaiety and social kindness, is truly one of the most important duties of self-command. It

is not the endurance of pain, that is the hardest trial to which fortitude can be exposed ; it is the calm endurance, if I may so term it, of the very smiles of Pleasure herself, —an endurance that is easy only to the noble love of future as well as present virtue, that can resist what it is delightful to crowds to do, as it resists the less terrible forms of evil, from which every individual of the crowd would shrink ; and the courage of those who have strength only to resist what is commonly termed fear, is a courage that is scarcely worthy of the name, — as little worthy of it as the partial courage of the soldier on his own element, if on a different element he were to tremble when exposed to a shipwreck ; or of the seaman, if he were in like manner to tremble at any of the common perils to which life can be exposed on land. The most strenuous combatants in the tumult of warfares, may be cowards, or worse than cowards, in the calm moral fight.

They yield to pleasure, though they danger brave,
And show no fortitude but in the field.

His is the only genuine strength of heart, who resists not the force of a few fears only, to which even in the eyes of the world it is ignominious for man to yield ; but the force of every temptation, to which it would be unworthy of man to yield, even though the world, in its capricious allotments of honour and shame, might not have chosen to regard with ignominy that peculiar species of cowardice.

By pleasure unsubdued, unbroke by pain,
He shares in that Omnipotence he trusts ;
All-bearing, all-attempting, till he falls ;
And, when he falls, writes *Vici* on his shield.¹

The duty which we owe to ourselves, as it leads us to value our own moral purity, leads us then to resist the solicitation of pleasures that would debase us, as it leads us

to endure pain itself. To endure pain is however, in like manner, a part of this duty, not merely from those high motives that have been already considered by us, the motives of grateful submission, which are drawn from the contemplation of the moral government of the world, by that wisdom and goodness under whose gracious dispensation the capacity of suffering itself has been arranged, so as to minister to the highest purposes which supreme benevolence could have in view, but also from the subordinate motives that regard only ourselves. To be querulously impatient, is but to add another evil, that might be avoided, to evil that already exists, and at the same time to throw from us one of the most powerful consolations which even that amount of existing evil admitted, — the consolation of knowing that we are able to bear what it is virtue to bear, and of trusting that we shall be able in like manner to endure, without repining, whatever other ills it may be our mortal allotment to encounter, and our duty to overcome, in the only way in which such ills can be overcome, by the patience that sustains them. By yielding to habits of cowardly discontent, we continually lessen more and more that internal vigour which might save us from the miserable cowardice that makes almost every act of virtue a painful effort, till we become at last the moral slaves of every physical evil, and therefore of every human being who is capable of inflicting on us any one of those ills. He never can be the master of his own resolutions, who does not know how to endure what it may be impossible to avoid without the sacrifice of virtue. When we hear of the usurper and oppressor of Roman liberty, who, when a whole world was prostrate before him, had subdued every thing but the inflexible spirit of a single heroic scorner of slavery, and of the inflicter of slavery,

*Et cuncta terrarum subacta,
Praeter atrocem animum Catonis—*¹

¹ Horat. Carm. lib. ii. ode i.

we do not need to be told, that he who could thus dare to offer to liberty its last homage, was not one whom mere suffering could appal.

Justum et tenacem propositi virum
 Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
 Non vultus instantis tyranni
 Mente quatit solida ;—neque Auster,
 Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ,
 Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus.
 Si fractus illabatur orbis,
 Impavidum ferient ruinae.¹

LECTURE XXVII.

OF OUR DUTY TO OURSELVES.

IN my last Lecture I began the consideration of that minor species of moral obligation which constitutes the propriety of certain actions, considered merely as terminating in the individual who performs them, — the duty, as it has been termed, which we owe to ourselves.

This duty I represented as having two great objects ; in the first place, the moral excellence of the individual, and in the second place, his happiness when any enjoyment, or the acquisition of the means of future enjoyment, is not inconsistent with that moral excellence, the cultivation of which is, in every case, even with respect to the mere personal duty, of primary obligation.

In my last Lecture, accordingly, I considered the former of these divisions of our duty to ourselves — illustrating especially the relation which a single action may bear to

¹ Horat. Carm. lib. iii. ode iii.

the whole moral character in after life, by the increased tendency which it induces to a repetition of it, and a corresponding diminution of the abhorrence with which the action, if vicious, was previously viewed ; and endeavouring, therefore, to impress you strongly with the importance of habits of self-command, by which alone, as enabling us to resist alike the gayer seductions of luxury, and the terror of personal suffering, we may be masters of our own moral resolutions, in circumstances in which vice might seem attended only with present pleasure, and virtue only with present pain.

After considering that division, then, which regards the cultivation of our moral excellence, I proceed now to consider the other branch of our duty to ourselves, of which our happiness is the immediate object.

When happiness is to be attained without the breach of any duty, it becomes a positive duty to pursue it ; as, in like manner, though no other duty were to be violated than that which we owe to ourselves, it would still be a violation of this duty to act in such a manner as to lessen our own happiness, or to occasion to ourselves actual distress. It is a virtue, in short, to be prudent, a vice to be imprudent ; or if prudence and imprudence should be considered as implying rather the knowledge or the ignorance of actions that may be advantageous to us or hurtful, than the performance of actions which we know to be advantageous to us or hurtful, — it is a virtue to act in such a manner as seems to us most prudent, a vice to act in such a manner as seems to us imprudent.

That there is not merely a satisfaction or regret, as at some piece of good or bad fortune, but a moral duty observed or violated, in these cases, is evident from the conscience of the agent himself, and from the feelings of those who contemplate his action. He who suffers from acting in a manner which he had reason to consider as imprudent, feels that he is justly punished ; and all who

consider his action and its consequences, agree in this reference of demerit to the agent, and in the feeling of propriety in the punishment which he has received, or rather which he may be said to have inflicted on himself. Nor can we wonder that the Deity, who willed the happiness of his creatures, and who made virtue, upon the whole, the most efficacious mode of contributing even to happiness in this life, should have made the wilful neglect of that which was in so many important respects the great object of moral feeling, an object itself of a species of moral disapprobation. If every individual of mankind were in every respect perfectly careless of his own happiness, every individual of mankind would be unhappy; and mere imprudence, if universal, would thus have the same injurious consequences as the universal oppression of all by all. From the harmony which the Deity has pre-established of virtue and utility, that conduct alone can be most virtuous, which, if universally adopted, would contribute most to the good of the universe; and the imprudent, therefore, are, to the extent of their wilful violation of the happiness of one individual, violaters of the universal system of good.

Our own happiness, then, is a moral object, as the happiness of others is a moral object. There is much more reason, however, upon the whole, to fear that individuals will be neglectful of the happiness of others rather than of their own, when opportunities of furthering either may have occurred to them; since, with respect to each personally, his own desire of pleasure, and consequently of all the means of pleasure, may be considered as so powerful as scarcely to require the aid of any mere feeling of moral duty, to call on him to be prudent. It is accordant, therefore, with the gracious benevolence of the Power who has arranged our susceptibilities of feeling, in relation to the circumstances in which we are placed, that the sentiment of moral obligation should there be strongest, where the additional influence is most needed; and that, while it is of

our own happiness we are, at least in ordinary circumstances, most desirous, it should yet seem to us, in the very privacy of our own conscience, a greater moral delinquency to invade any enjoyment possessed by another, than to sacrifice, by any rash folly, the means of similar enjoyment possessed by ourselves.

It is still, however, more than mere regret which we feel on considering any such imprudent sacrifice. There is truly a feeling of moral disapprobation—a feeling that in thus injuring the happiness of one individual of mankind, we have violated a part of the general system of duty, which in the actions that relate to himself only, as well as in the actions which relate directly to others, a wise and virtuous man should have constantly before him for the direction of his conduct.

It is morally fit, then, that every individual should endeavour to acquire and preserve the means of happiness, when the happiness is to be acquired or preserved without the breach of any of the duties of still stronger obligation which he may owe to communities or to other individuals.

But if the acquisition of happiness be his duty, in what manner is he to seek it? that is to say, in what objects is he to hope to find it?

O Happiness ! our being's end and aim !
 Good, pleasure, ease, content, whate'er thy name !
 That something still which prompts th' eternal sigh,
 For which we bear to live, or dare to die !
 Which still so near us, yet beyond us lies,
 O'erlook'd, seen double, by the fool and wise.
 Plant of celestial seed ! if dropt below,
 Say, in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow ?
 Fair op'ning to some court's propitious shine,
 Or deep with diamonds in the flaming mine ;
 Twined with the wreaths Parnassian laurels yield,
 Or reap'd in iron harvests of the field ?
 Where grows ? where grows it not ? If vain our toil,
 We ought to blame the culture, not the soil ;

Fix'd to no spot is happiness sincere,
'Tis nowhere to be found, or every where.¹

Happiness, considered as mere happiness, may be defined to be, a state of continued agreeable feeling, differing from what is commonly termed pleasure only as a whole differs from a part. Pleasure may be momentary; but to the pleasure of a moment we do not, at least in common language, give the name of happiness, which implies some degree of permanence in the pleasure.

As happiness, however, is only a more lasting state of pleasure or agreeable feeling, it is evident that every object, the remembrance, or possession, or hope of which is agreeable, is a source of happiness; one of many sources, because there are innumerable objects which, as remembered, possessed, or hoped, are agreeable. Some of these may indeed exclude others, and the objects excluded may be sources of purer or more lasting pleasure, which it would be imprudent therefore to abandon for a less good. But all are still sources of happiness, if happiness be agreeable feeling; and the only moral question relates to the choice.

It is evident, too, that this choice of happiness, as far as it depends on the intensity and duration of enjoyment, must be various in its objects in different individuals, according to their original constitution, education, habits, rank in life, or whatever else may be conceived to modify the desires of mankind. The saving of a few guineas, which, to the greater number, of the rich, at least, would afford no gratification, may be a source of very great delight to those whose circumstances of humbler fortune condemn them to be necessarily frugal; or even to the possessor of many thousand acres, if he have the misfortune to be a miser. With every variety of taste, in whatever manner induced, there is a corresponding happiness of possession: a gem, a painting, a medal, which many would rank with the mere

¹ Essay on Man, Ep. iv. l-16.

baubles of a toyshop, are treasures to a few. The loss of a single book of difficult acquisition, which may be a serious evil to a man of letters, is scarcely felt as a loss by one who sees books before him, as mere pieces of gay and gilded furniture, without the slightest desire of opening them, and whose library is perhaps the only room of his house which he never thinks of entering, or which he uses at least only for such purposes as any other room, with any other furniture, might serve as well. What is true of these sources of enjoyment, is true of every object of desire which some value much, while others perhaps regard it as insignificant, or at least regard it as comparatively of far less value. In thinking of what is to give delight, we must think at least as much of the mind that is to be delighted, as of the object which we may choose to term delightful. There are, probably, not two individuals to whom the acquisition of exactly the same objects would afford exactly the same quantity of happiness; and in a question of mere happiness, therefore, without regard to duty, it is as absurd to inquire into one universal standard, as to think of discovering one universal stature, or universal form of the infinitely varied features of mankind.

This inquiry, however, into one sole and exclusive standard of happiness, which seems so absurd when we consider the ever-varying tastes and fancies of mankind, was the great inquiry of the ancient philosophers. Happiness was to them not so much a generic name of many agreeable feelings, as a sort of universal *a parte rei*,—something which was one and simple, or which at least excluded any great diversity of the objects that corresponded with it. Instead, therefore, of sage calculations on the comparative amount of pleasure which different classes of objects might be expected to afford to the greater number of mankind, they have left to us a bold assertion of one species of happiness, as if it were the sole,—and many vain refinements, by which they would endeavour to reduce to it every other

form of delight, and where they could not so reduce them, to disprove the existence of enjoyments so obstinately unaccommodating; of enjoyments, however, as real and as independent in themselves, as that for the sole existence of which they contended.

The two principal sects opposed to each other in this inquiry into happiness, were the followers of Epicurus and Zeno; the former of whom regarded sensual pleasure as primarily the only real good, and every thing that was not directly sensual, as valuable only in relation to it; while the other sect contended, that there was no good whatever but in rectitude of conduct: that, but for this rectitude of choice, pleasure was not a good, pain not an evil.

The slightest consideration of the nature of the mind, as susceptible of various species of enjoyment, might seem sufficient to disprove the doctrine of both these rival sects. That our chief happiness, the happiness of far the greatest portion of our life, has no direct reference to the senses, is abundantly evident, and is admitted even by Epicurus himself; though he would still labour vainly to refer them remotely to that source; and though the virtues and intellectual acquirements, which adorn our nature infinitely more than any superior quickness of sensation, may be so traced through all their consequences, as to be found ultimately to contribute to the amount even of the pleasures of the senses, this influence on the senses is certainly the least part of their influence on happiness. The love of the parent for the child, of the child for the parent, all the delightful charities which render home a scene of perpetual joy, and which extend themselves beyond the domestic roof, with so wide a growth of affection: the sublime or tender remembrances of virtue; or in mere science, the luxury of truth itself, as an object of desires that may almost be said to be intellectual passions; the pleasure of the astronomer, in contemplating those seeming sparks of light, which to his senses are truly mere sparks of light, and

which are magnificent orbs only to the intellect that comprehends and measures their amplitude; the pleasure of the mathematician, in tracing relations of forms which his senses are absolutely incapable of presenting to him; of the poet, in describing scenes of beauty which his eyes never are to see;—all these pleasures, intellectual and moral, are pleasures, whether they tend or do not tend to heighten mere sensual enjoyment; and if nothing were to be left of them but this influence on the senses, human life would scarcely be worthy even of the brutal appetites that might still strive to find on earth the objects of their grovelling and languid and weary desire.

So false, then, even as a mere physical exposition of happiness, is the system of Epicurus. But if his philosophy err more grossly, the philosophy of the Stoical school, though it err more sublimely, is still but a sublimer error. The moral excellence of man is unquestionably what Zeno and his followers maintained it to be, a devout submission to the will of the Supreme Being, by the exercise of those virtues for which every state in which we can be placed, allows an opportunity of exercise. It never can be according to the real excellence of his nature to act viciously, nor a violation of his real excellence to act virtuously; but though all pleasure which is inconsistent with virtue is to be avoided, the pleasure which is consistent with virtue is to be valued, not merely as being that which attends virtue, but as being happiness, or at least an element of happiness. Between mere pleasure and mere virtue, there is a competition, in short, of the less with the greater; but though virtue be the greater, and the greater in every case in which it can be opposed to mere pleasure, pleasure is still good in itself, and would be covetable by the virtuous in every case in which the greater good of virtue is not inconsistent with it. Pain is, in like manner, an evil in itself; though to bear pain without a murmur, or without even any inward murmurs, be a good, — a good dependent on

ourselves, which it is in our power to add at any moment to the mere physical ill that does not depend on us, and a good more valuable than the pain in itself is evil.

It is, indeed, because pleasure and pain are not in themselves absolutely indifferent, that man is virtuous in resisting the solicitations of the one, and the threats of the other; and there is thus a self-confutation in the principles of Stoicism, which it is truly astonishing that the founder of the system, or some one of the ancient and modern commentators on it, should not have discovered. We may praise, indeed, the magnanimity of him who dares to suffer every external evil which man can suffer, rather than give his conscience one guilty remembrance; but it is because there is evil to be endured, that we praise him for his magnanimity in bearing the evil; and if there be no ill to be endured, there is no magnanimity that can be called forth to endure it. The bed of roses differs from the burning bull, not merely as a square differs from a circle, or as flint differs from clay, but as that which is physically good differs from that which is physically evil; and if they did not so differ, as good and evil, there could be as little merit in consenting, when virtue required the sacrifice, to suffer all the bodily pain which the instrument of torture could inflict, rather than to rest in guilty indolence on that luxurious couch of flowers, as there could be in the mere preference, for any physical purpose, of a circular to an angular form, or of the softness of clay to the hardness of flint. Moral excellence is, indeed, in every case, preferable to mere physical enjoyment; and there is no enjoyment worthy of the choice of man, when virtue forbids the desire. But virtue is the superior only, not the sole power. She has imperial sway; but her sway is imperial, only because there are forms of inferior good, over which it is her glory to preside.

It was this confusion as to the distinction of moral excellence, which is one object, and of mere happiness,

which is another object, that led to all the extravagant declamations of the Porch, as to the equal happiness of every situation in which man can exist. Nor is it only in their sublime defiances of pain, that the inconsistency which I have pointed out is involved ; it is involved equally in the scale of preferences which they present to us in our very virtues. We are to love, for example, health rather than sickness ; but we are thus to love it, not because health is in itself a greater good than sickness, but only because it is the will of Heaven that we should love it more than the pain and imbecility of disease. And why do we infer it to be the will of Heaven that we should prefer health to sickness ? It is not easy to discover any reason for this inference, but the absolute good of that which is declared in itself to be neither good nor evil. If health and sickness be in themselves, without regard to the will of Heaven, absolutely indifferent, they must still continue absolutely indifferent, or we must require some divine revelation to make known to us the will which we are to obey.

It is this tacit assumption of the very circumstances denied, which forms indeed the radical fallacy of the system of Zeno ; a sort of fallacy which, in the course of our inquiries, we have had frequent opportunities of tracing in the systems of philosophers of every age. The will of the gods, as directing the choice, when there was a competition of many objects, seemed to furnish a reasonable ground of preference ; a ground of preference which was felt to be the more reasonable, because every one had previously, in his own mind, felt and silently admitted those distinctions of physical good and evil which the Stoics ostensibly denied, but which corresponded exactly with the divine intimations of preferableness, that were only these very distinctions, under a more magnificent name. To obey the will of the gods in preferring wealth to poverty, was in truth to have made the previous discovery, that wealth, as an object of desire, was preferable to poverty ; and to have inferred, from

this previous belief of the physical distinction, that supposed will of Heaven, which it would have been impossible to ascertain if the objects had been indifferent in themselves. If all external things were in themselves absolutely equal, then was it impossible to infer from them that divine preference on which our own was to depend; and if that divine preference could, in any way, be inferred from the physical differences of things, as essentially good and evil, then was it not to the divine intimation, as subsequently inferred, that we were to look for the source of that distinction, from which alone, as previously felt, we inferred the intimation itself.

The same erroneous notion, as to the absolute indifference with respect to mere happiness of all things external, which were not in themselves either good or evil, but as pointed out by the gods for our choice, led naturally, and, as I cannot but think, necessarily, to the strange stoical paradox of the absolute equality in merit of all virtuous actions, and the absolute equality in demerit of all vicious actions. This, indeed, with many of the other paradoxes maintained by the sect, Dr. Smith is inclined to consider as not forming a part of the system of Zeno and Cleanthes, but rather as introduced with other mere dialectic and technical subtleties, by their disciple and follower Chrysippus. Yet I confess that, absurd as the paradox is, and discordant with all our moral feelings, it yet seems to me so completely involved in the fundamental doctrine of the school, that it must have occurred, or at least may naturally be supposed to have occurred, to the very founders of the school, as an obvious and inevitable consequence of their doctrine; and if it did so occur to them, we certainly have no reason to imagine that the assertors of so bold a paradox as that which stated the absolute physical indifference, as to happiness, of rapture and agony, would be very slow of maintaining a paradox additional, if the assertion of it were necessary to the maintenance of their system. It is an error, I may remark

by the way, which is not, in principle at least, confined to Stoicism, but is radically involved in all those theological systems of Ethics, which make the very essence of virtue to consist in mere obedience to the will of God. If all actions be equal, except as they are ordered or not ordered by Heaven, which makes them objects of moral choice, simply by pointing them out to us as fit or unfit to be performed; then is there only one virtue, and only one vice,—the virtue of doing as Heaven commands, the vice of not doing as Heaven commands. Whatever the action may be, there may be this moral difference, but, in the stoical or theological view of virtue and vice, there can be this difference only. To suppose that certain actions, merely by being more widely beneficial, are more obligatory than others; that certain other actions, merely by being more widely injurious, are of greater delinquency than others,—would be to suppose, in opposition to the fundamental tenet of the whole system, that what we term a benefit is a good in itself, what we term an injury an evil in itself, independently of that will which intimates to us what is fit or unfit to be done. The most beneficial action, an action that confers the greatest amount of happiness on our nearest relative, or on our most generous benefactor, is good only because it is divinely commanded; and this character of virtue it must share in common with every action, however comparatively unimportant in itself, that is so commanded; the most injurious action, of which the injury, too, may have been directed against those whom we were especially called to love, is evil only because it is divinely indicated to us as unworthy of our choice; and this character of vice it must share in common with all the actions that are marked to be evil by this prohibition, and by this prohibition only. We are astonished, indeed, that offences which we regard as trifling should be classed by the Stoics with crimes that appear to us of the most aggravated iniquity; but we are astonished only because

we assume another estimate of virtue and vice, and have not adopted their general doctrine, that virtue is mere obedience to the will of the gods, and vice disobedience to it. The paradox is repugnant, indeed, to every feeling of our heart, but still it must be allowed to be in perfect harmony with the system ; as it must be allowed also to be necessarily involved in every system that reduces virtue and vice to mere obedience or disobedience to the will of Heaven.

The whole errors of the stoical system, or at least its more important errors, may be traced, then, I conceive, to that radical mistake as to the nature of happiness, which we have been considering ; a mistake that, if truly allowed to influence the heart, could not fail to lessen the happiness of the individual, and in some measure too his virtue, in all the relations which personal happiness and virtue bear to private affection. If, indeed, it had been possible for human nature to feel what the Stoics maintained,—an absolute indifference as to every thing external, unless from some relation which it bore, or was imagined to bear, to the will of the Divinity, how much of all that tenderness which renders the domestic and friendly relations so delightful, would have been destroyed by the mere cessation of the little pleasures and little exercises of kindness and compassion which foster the benevolent regard. It is in relation to these private affections only, however, that I conceive the stoical system to have been practically injurious to virtue, however false it may have been in mere theory, either as a physical system of the nature of man, or as a system of ethics adapted to the circumstances of his physical constitution. In every thing which terminated in the individual himself, the virtue which it recommended was what man perhaps may never be able to attain, but what it would be well for man if he could even approach ; and the nearer his approach to it, the more excellent must he become. Pain is, indeed, an ill ; and we must err

physically whenever we pronounce that to endure this ill is not an affliction to our sensitive nature : but it would be well for us in our moral resolutions, at least in those which regard only sufferings which ourselves may have to overcome, if we could be truly what a perfect Stoic would require of us to be.

The error of the philosophy of the Porch, then, in relation to the physical ills of life, was at least an error of minds of the noblest character of moral enthusiasm. "If," says Montesquieu, "I could for a moment cease to think that I am a Christian, I could not fail to rank the destruction of the sect of Zeno in the list of the misfortunes of human kind. It was extravagant only in feelings which have in themselves a moral grandeur,—in the contempt of pleasures and afflictions. It alone knew how to make great citizens ; it alone made great men ; it alone made Emperors worthy of being called great. While the Stoics regarded as nothing, riches, grandeur, pleasures, and vexations, they occupied themselves only with labouring for the happiness of others in the discharge of the various social duties. It seemed as if they regarded that holy spirit—the portion of the divinity—which they believed to be in man, as a sort of bountiful providence that was watching over the human race. Born for society, they considered it as their office thus to labour for it ; and they laboured at little cost to the society which they benefited, because their reward was all within themselves : their philosophy sufficed for their happiness ; or rather, the happiness of others was the only accession which could increase their own." ¹

Hi mores, haec duri immota Catonis
Secta fuit, servare modum, finemque tenere,
Naturamque sequi, patriaeque impendere vitam ;
Nec sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo.
Huic epulae, vicisse famem : magnique penates,

¹ De l'Esprit des Lois, liv. xxiv. chap. x.

Submovisse hyemem tecto : pretiosaque vestis,
 Hirtam membra super Romani more Quiritis
 Induxisse togam : Venerisque huic maximus usus,
 Progenies : Urbi pater est, Urbique maritus :
 Justitiae cultor, rigidi servator honesti :
 In commune bonus : nullosque Catonis in actus
 Subrepsit, partemque tulit sibi nata voluptas.¹

In the peculiar circumstances of the ages in which the stoical doctrines chiefly flourished,—the servile and wretched ages in which, with that intellectual light, in a few individuals, which leads when there is virtue, to grandeur of soul, and almost leads to virtue itself,—there was every where around a cold and gloomy despotism, that left man only to gaze on misery, or to feel misery, if he did not strive to rise wholly above it ; it is not wonderful that a philosophy which gave aid to this necessary elevation above the scene of human suffering and human ignominy, should have been the favourite philosophy of every better spirit ; of all those names which, at the distance of so many centuries, we still venerate as the names of some more than mortal deliverers of mankind.

“Among the different schools,” says Apollonius, in the sublime eulogy of the Emperor M. Aurelius, “Among the different schools he soon distinguished one which taught man to rise above himself. It discovered to him, as it were, a new world,—a world in which pleasure and pain were annihilated, where the senses had lost all their power over the soul, where poverty, riches, life, death, were nothing, and virtue existed alone. Romans ! it was this philosophy which gave you Cato and Brutus. It was it which supported them in the midst of the ruins of liberty. It extended itself afterwards, and multiplied under your tyrants. It seemed as if it had become a want to your oppressed ancestors, whose uncertain life was incessantly

¹ Lucani Pharsalia, lib. ii. 380-391.

under the axe of the despot. In those times of disgrace alone, it preserved the dignity of human nature. It taught to live ; it taught to die ; and, while tyranny was degrading the soul, it lifted it up again with more force and grandeur. This heroic philosophy was made for heroic souls. Aurelius marked as one of the most fortunate days of his life, that day of his boyhood in which he first heard of Cato. He preserved with gratitude the names of those who had made him, in like manner, acquainted with Brutus and Thraseas. He thanked the gods that he had had an opportunity of reading the maxims of Epictetus."

That great emperor, who thus looked with veneration to others, was himself one of the noble boasts of Stoicism ; and it must always be the glory of the philosophy of the Porch, that, whatever its truths and errors might be, they were truths and errors which animated the virtues and comforted the sufferings of some of the noblest of mankind.

With all the admiration, however, which it is impossible for us not to feel, of the sublimer parts of this system, it is still, as I said, founded on a false view of our nature. Man is to be considered not in one light only, but in many lights ; in all of which he may be a subject of agreeable feelings, and consequently of happiness, as a series of agreeable feelings. He is a sensitive being, an intellectual being, a moral being, a religious being, and there are species of happiness that correspond with these varieties.

Though it would be unnecessary, then, to enter on any very minute details of all the varieties of agreeable feeling, of which happiness, as a whole, may be composed, a few slight remarks may still be added, on these chief specific relations of our happiness, sensitive, intellectual, moral, and religious.

That the pleasure which may be felt by us as sensitive beings is not to be rejected by us as unworthy of man, I need not prove to you, after the definition of happiness

which I have given you. Happiness, however, though only a series of agreeable feelings, is to be estimated not only by the intensity and duration of those agreeable feelings which compose it, but by the relations of these, as likely to produce or not to produce, to prevent or not to prevent, other series of agreeable feelings, and to cherish or repress that moral excellence which, as an object of desire, is superior even to pleasure itself. It is according to these relations chiefly that the pleasures of the senses are to be estimated. In themselves, as mere pleasures, they are good, and if they left the same ardour of generous enterprise, or of patient self-command, if they did not occupy time, which should have been employed in higher offices, and if, in their influence on the future capacity of mere enjoyment, they did not tend to lessen or prevent happiness which would otherwise have been enjoyed, or to occasion pain which otherwise would not have arisen, and which is equivalent, or more than equivalent, to the temporary happiness afforded, it would, in these circumstances, I will admit, be impossible for man to be too much a sensualist; since pleasure, which in itself is good, is evil only when its consequences are evil.

He who has lavished on us so many means of delight, as to make it impossible for us, in the ordinary circumstances of life, not to be sensitively happy in some greater or less degree, has not made nature so full of beauty that we should not admire it. He has not poured fragrance and music around us, and strewed with flowers the very turf on which we tread, that our heart may not rejoice as we move along, but that we may walk through this world of loveliness with the same dull eye and indifferent soul, with which we should have traversed unvaried scenes, without a colour, or an odour, or a song.

The pleasures of the senses, then, are not merely allowable, under the restrictions which I stated, but to abstain

from them with no other view than because they are pleasures, would be a sort of contempt of the goodness of God, or a blasphemy against his gracious bounty, if we were to assert that such abstinence from pleasure, merely as pleasure, can be gratifying to infinite benevolence.

It is very different, however, when the solicitations of pleasure are resisted on account of those circumstances which I have mentioned as the only reasonable restrictions on enjoyment, circumstances which give to temperance its rank as one of the virtues, and as one which is far from being the humblest of the glorious band.

Even though excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures had no other evil than the pains and lessening of enjoyment to which they give occasion, this reduction of the general amount of happiness would afford an irresistible reason for curbing the sensual appetite. The headach, the languor, the long and miserable diseases of intemperance, are themselves sufficient punishments of the luxurious indulgences which produced them. But, without taking these into account, how great is the loss of simpler pleasure, of pleasure more frequently and more universally acquirable, but which the habit of seeking only violent enjoyments for an inflamed and vitiated appetite, has rendered too feeble to be felt. They do not lose little who lose only what the intemperate lose. To enjoy, perhaps, a single luxury, which, even though they were truly to enjoy it, would not be worth so costly a purchase, they give up the capacity of innumerable delights. Though it were pleasing rather than painful to gaze for a few moments on the sun, the pleasure would surely be too dearly bought, if it were to leave the eyes for hours dazzled and incapable of enjoying the beautiful colours of that wide expanse of nature with which the same radiance, when more moderately shed, refreshes the very vision which it delights.

The influence of intemperance, in lessening the amount of general enjoyment, injurious as it is, even in this way, to a being who loves happiness, is slight, however, when compared with its more fatal injury to every virtuous habit. He who has trained his whole soul to sensual indulgences, has prepared for himself innumerable seductions from moral good, while he has, at the same time, prepared in his own heart a greater weakness of resisting those seductions. He requires too costly and cumbrous an apparatus of happiness to feel delight at the call of virtue, which may order him where he cannot be accompanied by so many superfluities, but to him necessary things; and he will learn, therefore, to consider that which would deprive him of his accustomed enjoyments, as a foe, not as a guardian or moral adviser. It is mentioned of a friend of Charles I. in the civil war of the Parliament, that he had made up his mind to take horse and join the royal party, but for one circumstance, that he could not reconcile himself to the thought of being an hour or two less in bed than he had been accustomed in his quiet home; and he therefore, after duly reflecting on the impossibility of being both a good subject and a good sleeper, contented himself with remaining to enjoy his repose. Absurd as such an anecdote may seem, it states only what passes innumerable times through the silent heart of every voluptuary, in similar comparisons of the most important duties with the most petty but habitual pleasures. How many more virtuous actions would have been performed on earth, if the performance of them had not been inconsistent with enjoyments, as insignificant in themselves as an hour of unnecessary and perhaps hurtful slumber?

In one of the most eloquent of the ancient writers there is a striking picture of this contrast, which the virtuous and the dissolute present almost to our very senses. "Altum quiddam est virtus, excelsum, regale, invictum,

infatigabile; voluptas, humile, servile, imbecillum, caducum, cujus statio ac domicilium fornices et popinae sunt. Virtutem in templo invenies, in foro, in curia, pro muris stantem, pulverulentam, coloratam, callosas habentem manus; voluptatem latitantem saepius, ac tenebras captantem, circa balnea ac sudatoria, ac loca aedilem metuentia, mollem, enervem, mero atque unguento madentem, pallidam, aut fucatam et medicamentis pollutam.”¹

From this tendency of excessive indulgence in mere sensual pleasure to weaken and debase the mind, and thus to expose it an easy prey to every species of evil, Epicurus, the great assertor of sensual pleasures, as the sole direct good in life, was led to maintain the importance of temperance, almost with the same appearance of rigid severity as the teachers of a very different school. In mere precepts of virtue, indeed—that is to say, in every thing practical—the schools, the most opposite to each other in their views of the nature of good, were nearly similar. Both set out from principles that might have seemed to lead them far from each other; yet both arrived at the same conclusions, on the points on which it was most important to form a judgment. It is gratifying to find the loose freedom of the most licentious system of immorality thus forced, for its own happiness, to submit itself to the moral restraints which it seemed to boast of throwing off, and Pleasure herself compelled, as it were, to pay homage to that Virtue from which she vainly endeavoured to withdraw the worship of mankind.

¹ Seneca de Vita Beata, cap. vii.

LECTURE XXVIII.

OF OUR DUTY TO OURSELVES—CULTIVATION OF INTELLECTUAL, MORAL,
AND RELIGIOUS HAPPINESS.

THE greater part of my last Lecture was occupied with an examination of the erroneous opinions as to happiness, entertained by some sects of ancient philosophers, and particularly of the doctrines of one memorable sect, whose general system, false as it was in many respects, had yet so much in it of the sublimity of virtue, and was so eminently fitted to produce or to attract to it whatever was morally great, that, when we read of any noble act of patriotism in the ages and countries in which the system flourished, we almost take for granted that he who dared heroically, or suffered heroically, was of the distinguished number of this school of heroes.

The error of the ancient inquirers into happiness consisted, as we found, in excessive simplification—in the belief that happiness was one and simple, definite, and almost self-subsisting, like an universal essence of the schools,—in the assertion, therefore, of one peculiar form of good, as if it were all that deserved that name, and the consequent exclusion of other forms of good that could not be reduced to the favourite species. He who had confined all happiness to the pleasure of the senses, was of course under the necessity of denying that there was any moral pleasure whatever, which had not a direct relation to some mere sensual delight; while the assertor of a different system, who had affirmed virtue only to be good, was of course under an equal necessity of denying that any pleasure of the senses, however intense or pure, could be even the slightest element of happiness. Both were right in what

they admitted, wrong in what they excluded; and the paradoxes into which they were led, were necessary consequences of the excessive simplification.

A wider and more judicious view of our nature would have shown, that human happiness is as various as the functions of man: that the Deity, who has united us by so many relations to the whole living and inanimate world, has, in these relations, surrounded us with means of varied enjoyment, which it is as truly impossible for us not to partake with satisfaction, as not to behold the very scene itself, which is for ever in all its beauty before our eyes: that happiness is the name of a series of agreeable feelings, and of such a series only; and that whatever is capable of exciting agreeable feelings, is, therefore, or may be, to that extent, a source of happiness.

Man is a sensitive being, an intellectual being, a moral being, a religious being. There are agreeable feelings which belong to him in each of these capacities; a happiness, in short, sensitive, intellectual, moral, and religious; and though we may affect, in verbal accordance with some system, to deny any of these various forms of good, it is only in words that we can so deny them.

The remarks in my last lecture were limited to the happiness which we are capable of enjoying in the first of these capacities, as sensitive beings. I proceed then now to the happiness of which we are intellectually susceptible.

That pleasure does attend the sublime operations of intellect in the discovery of truth, or the splendid creations of fancy, or the various arts to which science and imagination are subservient, every one, I presume, will readily admit, to whom these operations are familiar. But the great masters in science and art are few; and the pleasure which they feel in their noblest inventions, therefore, would be but a slight element in the sum of human happiness. The joy, however, is not confined to the productive

functions, which have the pride of contemplating these great results as their own. It exists to all who have the humbler capacity of contemplating them merely as results of human genius. It is delightful to learn, though another may have been the discoverer; and perhaps the pleasure which a mind truly ardent for knowledge feels in those early years in which the new world of science is opened, as it were, to its view, and every step, and almost every glance, affords some new accession of admiration and power, may not be surpassed, even by the pleasure which it is afterwards to feel, when it is not to be the receiver of the wisdom of others, but itself the enlightener of the wise.

The peculiar and most prominent advantage of the intellectual pleasures, however, in relation to general happiness, regards as much what they prevent as what they afford. It is what I had before occasion to point out to you, when treating of the common causes of fretfulness of temper, to which mere want of occupation leads perhaps as frequently as any positive cause. This advantage is the ready resource which these pleasures afford, in cases in which the hours would be slow and heavy without them. One of the most valuable arts of happiness, to those who are not privileged, if I may so express it, with the necessity of labour, is to know how to prepare resources that may be readily at hand, in the dreary hours that are without employment of any other kind. It is not always in the power of the idler to command the company of other idlers, with whom he may busy himself in labouring to forget that he is not busy; and, delightful as it may be for a while, it is but a weary occupation after all, to walk along the pavement or the field, and to count faces or trees, for the pleasure of being a little more, and but a very little more active, than if the same time had been spent on the same quiet seat, with folded arms, and drowsy eyelids, that have the dulness of beginning slumber, without its repose. In bad weather

and slight indisposition, when even these feeble resources are lost, the heavy burden of a day is still more insupportable to him who has nothing on which to lean, that may aid him in supporting it; and who, when an hour is at last shaken off, still sees other hours hanging over him, that are to weigh him down as drearily and heavily. In such circumstances, how much does he add to happiness, who can give the mind a resource that is ready at its very call, in almost all the circumstances in which it can be placed; and such a resource does the power of deriving pleasure from a book afford. The consolation which this yields, is indeed next in value to the consolation of virtue itself. It would not be easy to form a conception adequate to the amount of positive pleasure enjoyed, and still more of positive pain prevented, which, in civilized life, is due to works that are perhaps of no value, but as they serve this temporary purpose of filling up the vacuities of empty days, or empty hours even of days that in part are occupied.

I need not quote to you the very beautiful passage of Cicero on this universality of the delights of literature, in youth, in old age, at home, and abroad, which has been so often quoted by every body that it must be familiar to you all. There is a beautiful passage, however, of another Roman philosopher, to the same purport, with which you are probably less acquainted, that expresses in a manner as striking the advantages of study, in the power which it gives us, not merely of occupying our hours of leisure, but of extending our existence through all the ages that have preceded us, and enjoying the communion of the noblest minds with which those ages were adorned. "*Soli omnium otiosi sunt, qui sapientiae vacant: soli vivunt. Nec enim suam tantum aetatem bene tuentur: omne aevum suo adjiciunt. Quidquid annorum ante illos actum est, illis acquisitum est. Nisi ingratissimi sumus, illi clarissimi sacrarum opinionum conditores nobis nati sunt, nobis vitam*

praeparaverunt. Ad res pulcherrimas, ex tenebris ad lucem erutas, alieno labore deducimur: nullo nobis saeculo interdictum est: in omnia admittimur: et si magnitudine animi egredi humanae imbecillitatis angustias libet, multum per quod spatiemur temporis est. Disputare cum Socrate licet, dubitare cum Carneade, cum Epicuro quiescere, naturam cum Stoicis vincere, cum Cynicis excedere, cum rerum natura in consortium omnis aevi pariter incedere.”¹ “What happiness,” he continues, “and how beautiful an old age awaits him who has betaken himself to the communion of those great minds; who has constantly with him those with whom he may deliberate on every thing which concerns him; whom he may consult daily as to his own moral progress, and hear truth from them without contumely, praise without adulation; to whose very similitude, by this intercourse, he may learn at last to form even his own feebler nature. We are often in the habit of complaining that our parents, and all the circumstances of our birth, are not of our choice, but of our fortune. We have it in our power, however, to be born as we please in this second birth of genius. Of the illustrious minds that have preceded us, we have only to determine to whom we wish to be allied; and we are already adopted, not to the inheritance of his mere name, but to the nobler inheritance of every thing which he possessed.”

Such, in importance, is intellectual happiness, considered merely as happiness, and such, consequently, the practical duty of cultivating it. Still more important, however, is the happiness of which we are susceptible as moral beings.

This moral happiness may be considered, practically, in two lights, — as relating to things, and as relating to persons; to the objects of our covetous desires of every sort,

and to the living objects of our affections of love and hate, in all their varieties.

With respect to the former of these divisions, in the competition of the many objects that may attract us, a most important practical rule for happiness, is to give our chief consideration, so as to produce, indirectly, a corresponding tendency of desire to the advantages of those objects which are attended with least risk of disappointment, and attended, too, with fewest entanglements of necessary obsequiousness to the powerful, and enmities of competitors that, even though our pursuit should be ultimately successful, may disturb our peace, almost as much as if we had wholly failed. It is most important, then, for our general happiness, to have associated the notion of happiness itself with objects that are of easy attainment, and that depend more upon ourselves than on the accidents of fortune. If it is not easy for him who has many wishes to be tranquil, it must be still less easy for him to be happy who has many disappointments ; and the ambitious man must be fortunate, indeed, who has not frequently such disappointments to encounter. Did we know nothing more of any two individuals of moderate fortune, than that they had associated the image of supreme felicity, the one with the enjoyments of benevolence and literature and domestic tranquillity, and the other with the acquisition of all the tumultuous grandeur of elevated place, could we hesitate for a moment to predict, to whose lot the greater sum of pleasure would fall, and the less of miserable solicitude ? “ How, indeed, can he be happy,” to borrow the language of one who had many opportunities of witnessing that ambition which he so well described, “ how can he be happy, who is ever weary of homage received, and who sets a value on nothing but what is refused to him ? He can enjoy nothing ; not his glory, for it seems to him obscure ; not his station, for he thinks only of mounting to some greater height ; not even his very

repose, for he is wretched in proportion as he is obliged to be tranquil."

It would be well, indeed, for those who have the misfortune of thinking that happiness is only another name for the possession of wealth and power, if they could trace the whole series of feelings that have constituted the life of far the greater number of the wealthy and the powerful.

If all, united, thy ambition call,
From ancient story learn to scorn them all.
There, in the rich, the honour'd, famed, and great,
See the false scale of happiness complete:
In hearts of kings, or arms of queens who lay,
How happy those to ruin, these betray !
Mark by what wretched steps their glory grows,
From dirt and sea-weed as proud Venice rose !
In each, how guilt and greatness equal ran,
And all that raised the hero sunk the man.
Now Europe's laurels on their brows behold.
But stain'd with blood, or ill exchanged for gold :
Then see them broke with toils, or sunk in ease,
Or infamous for plunder'd provinces !
O Wealth ill-fated ! which no act of fame
Ere taught to shine, or sanctified from shame !
What greater bliss attends their close of life !
Some greedy minion, or imperious wife,
The trophied arches, storied halls invade,
And haunt their slumbers in the pompous shade.
Alas ! not dazzled with their noontide ray,
Compute the morn and evening to the day,—
The whole amount of that enormous fame,
A tale that blends their glory with their shame.¹

Of kindred character with moderation in our wishes, which regards the future only, is the habit of considering the cheerful rather than the gloomy appearances of things, which allows so much delight to be felt in things possessed,

¹ Essay on Man, Ep. iv. 235-303.

as scarcely to afford room for that discontent with the present, in which the greater number of our wishes of the future, and especially of those aimless and capricious wishes which it is most difficult to satisfy, have their origin. How many are there who, surrounded with all the means of enjoyment, make to themselves a sad occupation of extracting misery from happiness itself; and who labour to be wretched, as if for no other purpose than to show the insufficiency of fortune to confer what it seems to promise. Good and evil are so mingled together in this system of things, that there is scarcely any event so productive of evil, as not to have some good mixed with it, direct, or indirect; and scarcely any so good as not to be attended with some proportion of evil, or, at least, of what seems to us for the time to be evil. As we dwell more on one or on the other, we do not indeed alter the real nature of things, but we render them in their relation to us very nearly the same, as if their nature were really altered. If we look on them with a gloomy eye, all are gloomy. But there is a source of light within us, an everlasting sunshine, which we can throw on every thing around, till it reflect on us what has beamed from our own serene heart; like that great luminary which, ever moving through a world of darkness, is still on every side surrounded with the radiance which flows from itself; and cannot appear without converting night into the cheerfulness of day.

One other practical rule with respect to our wishes, it is of still greater importance to render familiar to us, — that, in estimating the different objects which we obtain, and those which we see obtained by others, we should accustom ourselves to consider, not merely what each has acquired, but what has been given by each in purchase for it, — the time, the labour, the comfort, perhaps the virtue; and that we do not repine, therefore, when objects which we should have wished to acquire, are possessed by those who, in the

great barter of happiness, or what seems to be happiness, have paid for them more than we should have consented to pay. All which we wish to attain in life is so truly a matter of purchase, that I know no view so powerful as this for preventing discontent in occasional failure; and I cannot urge it more forcibly to you than has been done by one of the first female writers of the age, in a very eloquent moral Essay against Inconsistency in our Expectations. From this Essay of Mrs. Barbauld, which is confessedly founded, in its great argument, on a very striking paragraph of Epictetus, I quote a few passages:

“We should consider this world as a great mart of commerce, where fortune exposes to our view various commodities,—riches, ease, tranquillity, fame, integrity, knowledge. Every thing is marked at a settled price. Our time, our labour, our ingenuity, are so much ready money, which we are to lay out to the best advantage. Examine, compare, choose, reject; but stand to your own judgment; and do not, like children, when you have purchased one thing, repine that you do not possess another which you did not purchase. Such is the force of well-regulated industry, that a steady and vigorous exertion of our faculties, directed to one end, will generally ensure success. Would you, for instance, be rich? Do you think that single point worth the sacrificing every thing else to? You may then be rich. Thousands have become so from the lowest beginnings, by toil, and patient diligence, and attention to the minutest articles of expense and profit. But you must give up the pleasures of leisure, of a vacant mind, of a free unsuspecting temper. If you preserve your integrity, it must be a coarse-spun and vulgar honesty. Those high and lofty notions of morals which you brought with you from the schools must be considerably lowered, and mixed with the baser alloy of a jealous and worldly-minded prudence. You must learn to do hard, if not

unjust things ; and for the nice embarrassments of a delicate and ingenuous spirit, it is necessary for you to get rid of them as fast as possible. You must shut your heart against the Muses, and be content to feed your understanding with plain household truths. In short, you must not attempt to enlarge your ideas, or polish your taste, or refine your sentiments ; but must keep on in one beaten track, without turning aside either to the right hand or to the left. ‘ But I cannot submit to drudgery like this — I feel a spirit above it.’ ’Tis well : be above it then ; only do not repine that you are not rich.

“ Is knowledge the pearl of price ? That too may be purchased, by steady application and long solitary hours of study and reflection. Bestow these, and you shall be wise. ‘ But, (says the man of letters,) what a hardship is it, that many an illiterate fellow, who cannot construe the motto of the arms on his coach, shall raise a fortune and make a figure, while I have little more than the common conveniences of life.’ Et tibi magna satis ? Was it in order to raise a fortune that you consumed the sprightly hours of youth in study and retirement ? Was it to be rich that you grew pale over the midnight lamp, and distilled the sweetness from the Greek and Roman spring ? You have then mistaken your path, and ill employed your industry. ‘ What reward have I then for all my labours ?’ What reward ! A large comprehensive soul, well purged from vulgar fears, and perturbations, and prejudices ; able to comprehend and interpret the works of man — of God. A rich, flourishing, cultivated mind, pregnant with inexhaustible stores of entertainment and reflection. A perpetual spring of fresh ideas ; and the conscious dignity of superior intelligence. Good Heaven ! and what reward can you ask besides ?

“ ‘ But is it not some reproach upon the economy of Providence that such a one, who is a mean dirty fellow,

should have amassed wealth enough to buy half a nation ? Not in the least. He made himself a mean dirty fellow for that very end. He has paid his health, his conscience, his liberty, for it ; and will you envy him his bargain ? Will you hang your head and blush in his presence because he outshines you in equipage and show ? Lift up your brow with a noble confidence, and say to yourself, I have not these things, it is true ; but it is because I have not sought, because I have not desired them ; it is because I possess something better. I have chosen my lot : I am content and satisfied.

“ You are a modest man : you love quiet and independence, and have a delicacy and reserve in your temper, which renders it impossible for you to elbow your way in the world, and be the herald of your own merits. Be content, then, with a modest retirement, with the esteem of your intimate friends, with the praises of a blameless heart and a delicate ingenuous spirit ; but resign the splendid distinctions of the world to those who can better scramble for them.”

“ The man whose tender sensibility of conscience, and strict regard to the rules of morality, make him scrupulous and fearful of offending, is often heard to complain of the disadvantages he lies under in every path of honour and profit. ‘ Could I but get over some nice points, and conform to the practice and opinion of those about me, I might stand as fair a chance as others for dignities and preferment.’ And why can you not ? What hinders you from discarding this troublesome scrupulosity of yours which stands so grievously in your way ? If it be a small thing to enjoy a healthful mind, sound at the very core, that does not shrink from the keenest inspection — inward freedom from remorse and perturbation — unsullied whiteness and simplicity of manners—a genuine integrity

Pure in the last recesses of the mind ;

if you think these advantages an inadequate recompense for what you resign, dismiss your scruples this instant, and be a slave merchant, a parasite, or what you please.”¹

Bring then these blessings to a strict account ;
Make fair deductions; see to what they mount :
How much of other each is sure to cost ;
How each for other oft is wholly lost ;
How inconsistent greater goods with these ;
How sometimes life is risk'd, and always ease :
Think; and if still the things thy envy call,
Say, wouldst thou be the man to whom they fall ?²

With respect to the living objects of our affections, whom we voluntarily add to those with whom nature has peculiarly connected us, the most important, though the most obvious of all practical rules, is, to consider well in every instance what it is which we are about to love or hate, that we may not love with any peculiar friendship what it may be dangerous to our virtue to love ; or, if not dangerous to our virtue, at least dangerous to our peace, from the vices or follies which all our care may be vain to remedy, and of which much of the misery and disgrace cannot fail to overflow upon us. In the emotions of an opposite kind, before we consent to submit our happiness to that disquietude which we must endure as often as we feel hatred, or anger, or lasting indignation of any sort, it is, in like manner, necessary to pause, and consider whether it may not have been still possible for us to have been deceived, as to those supposed facts which appear to us to justify our malevolent feelings. We must not imagine, as they who err in this respect are very apt to imagine, that too quick a wrath is justified by the avowal that our temper is passionate ; for it is the inattention to this very quickness of feeling resent-

¹ Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose, by John Aikin, M.D. and Anna Lætitia Barbauld. 3d edition, pp. 62-69. London, 1792.

² Essay on Man, Ep. iv. 269-276.

ment, which a passionate disposition denotes, that constitutes the chief moral evil of such exacerbations of unmerited anger, that are converted into a passionate habit by the inattention only. Our duties arise often from our dangers, and increase with our dangers. The adulterer does not think of justifying himself by the confession of the violence of his adulterous desires: the liveliness of feelings which he knows to be unworthy of him, as they show him the greater peril to which his virtue is exposed, should render him more eager to strive to repress them; and he who feels himself most readily irritable, instead of regarding his irritability as an excuse, should, in like manner, look upon it only as an additional reason to avoid, most sedulously, every occasion of anger, and to consider the first slight beginning emotion, therefore, as a warning to beware.

I have already spoken of the advantage of looking to the bright sides of things; and it is not of less advantage to have acquired the habit of looking to the bright sides of persons. In our just resentment against a few, we are not to lose our admiration and love of the whole human race. We may have been deceived; but it does not therefore follow that all around us are deceivers. How much happiness does he lose who is ever on the watch for injustice, and to whom the very unsuspecting confidence of friendship itself is only something that will require a more careful and vigilant scrutiny.

Farewell to virtue's peaceful times :
Soon will you stoop to act the crimes
Which thus you stoop to fear.
Guilt follows guilt ; and where the train
Begins with wrongs of such a stain,
What horrors form the rear !

Throned in the sun's descending car,
What power unseen diffuseth far

This tenderness of mind ?
What genius smiles on yonder flood ?
What God, in whispers from the wood,
Bids every thought be kind ?

O thou, whate'er thy awful name,
Whose wisdom our untoward frame
With social love restrains ;
Thou, who by fair affection's ties
Givest us to double all our joys,
And half disarm our pains ;

Let universal candour still,
Clear as yon heaven-reflecting rill,
Preserve my open mind ;
Nor this nor that man's crooked ways
One sordid doubt within me raise,
To injure human kind.¹

On the general happiness which virtue, considered as one great plan of conduct, tends to afford, it would be idle to add any remarks, after the full discussions of the whole doctrine of virtue with which we were so long occupied. Where it is, there is no need of effort to appear happy ; and, where it is not, the effort will be vain. Nothing, indeed, can be juster than the observation of Rousseau, that "it is far easier to be happy than to appear so." What inexhaustible sources of delight are there in all those ready suggestions which constitute the remembrances of a life well spent, when there is not a familiar place or person that does not recall to us the happiness which attended some deed of virtue, or at least some benevolent wish ! "The true secret of happiness," says Fontenelle, "is to be well with our own mind. The vexations which we must expect to happen to us from without, will often throw us back upon ourselves : it is good to have there an agreeable retreat."

¹ Akenside.

The delights of virtue, of course, lead me to those delights of religion with which they are so intimately connected. Even these, too, are to a certain extent subjects of practical deliberation. We must, if we value our happiness, be careful in determining what it is which we denominate religion, that we may not extend its supposed duties to usages inconsistent with our tranquillity ; and still more, that we may not form to ourselves unworthy notions of him on whom we consider our whole happiness to depend. It is not enough to believe in God, as an irresistible power that presides over the universe ; for this a malignant demon might be ; it is necessary for our devout happiness that we should believe in him as that pure and gracious Being who is the encourager of our virtues and the comforter of our sorrows.

Quantum religio potuit suadere malorum,

exclaims the Epicurean poet, in thinking of the evils which superstition, characterized by that ambiguous name, had produced : and where a fierce or gloomy superstition has usurped the influence which religion graciously exercises only for purposes of benevolence to man, whom she makes happy with a present enjoyment, by the very expression of devout gratitude for happiness already enjoyed, it would not be easy to estimate the amount of positive misery which must result from the mere contemplation of a tyrant in the heavens, and of a creation subject to his cruelty and caprice. It is a practical duty then, in relation to our own happiness, to trace assiduously the divine manifestations of goodness in the universe, that we may know with more delightful confidence the benevolence which we adore. It is our duty, in like manner, to study the manifestations of his wisdom in the regular arrangement of the laws of the universe, that we may not ignorantly tremble at imaginary influences, which we almost oppose to his divine power. How often have we occasion to observe in individuals, who think that

they are believers and worshippers of one omnipotent God, a species of minor superstition, which does not indeed, like the more gigantic species, destroy happiness at once, but which, in those who are unfortunately subject to it, is almost incessantly making some slight attack on happiness, and is thus as destructive of tranquillity as it is dishonourable to the religion that is professed. There is scarcely any thing, however insignificant and contemptible, which superstition has not converted into an oracle. Spectres and dreams, and omens of every kind, have made cowards even of the bravest men; and though we no longer stop an expedition, or suspend an important debate, at the perking of a chicken, or the flight of a crow, the great multitude, even in nations the most civilized, are still under the influence of imaginary terrors that scarcely can be said to be less absurd. Of how much sorrow might the same account be given, as that which Gay ascribes to the farmer's wife :

Alas ! you know the cause too well,
The salt is spilt : — to me it fell ;
Then, to contribute to my loss,
My knife and fork were laid across ;
On Friday too ! the day I dread !
Would I were safe at home in bed !
Last night — I vow to Heaven 'tis true —
Bounce from the fire a coffin flew.
Next post some fatal news shall tell ;
God send, my Cornish friends be well !¹

The difficulty of distinguishing casual successions of events from the unvarying sequences of causation, gives unfortunately to the ignorant too much room for such disquieting associations, which nothing but juster views of philosophy can be expected to prevent or dissipate. The cultivation of sound opinions in science is thus, in more senses than one, the cultivation of happiness.

¹ Fables, fab. xxxvii.

When religion is truly free from all superstition, there can be no question that the delights which it affords are the noblest of which our nature is capable. It surrounds us with every thing which it is delightful to contemplate ; with all those gracious qualities, that, even in the far less degrees of excellence in which they can be faintly shadowed by the humble nature of man, constitute whatever we love and venerate in the noblest of our race. We cannot be surrounded, indeed, at every moment by patriots and sages, — by the human enlighteners and blessers of the world, for our own existence is limited to a small portion of that globe, and a few hours of those ages which they successively enlightened and blessed ; but we can be surrounded, and are every moment surrounded by a wisdom and goodness that transcend far more whatever patriots and sages could exhibit to us, than these transcended the meanest of the multitude, whom their generous efforts were scarcely able to elevate to the rank of men. If we but open our heart to the benevolence that is shining on it, as we open our eyes to the colours with which the earth is embellished, we have nature constantly before us ; and the God of nature, whose goodness is every where, like the unfading sunshine of the world.

When other joys are present, indeed, the pleasures of religion, it may be thought, are superfluous. We are happy ; and happiness may suffice. Yet he knows little of the grateful influence of devotion, who has never felt it as a heightener of pleasure as well as a comforter of grief. “O speak the joy,” says Thomson, after describing a scene of parental and conjugal happiness :

O speak the joy, ye whom the sudden tear
Surprises often, while you look around,
And nothing strikes your eye but sights of bliss.¹

¹ Seasons ; conclusion of Spring.

The tear which thus arises, is a tear of gratitude to him who has given the happiness which the parental heart is at once sharing and producing,—the overflowing tenderness of one who feels in the enjoyment of that very moment, that the Power which blesses him will be the blesser too, in after-life, of those whom he loves.

It is in hours of affliction, however, it will be admitted, that the influence is most beneficial; but how glorious a character is it of religion, that it is thus most powerful when its influence is most needed, and when it, and the virtues which it has fostered, are the only influences that do not desert the miserable, and the only influences that can relieve. Religion is most powerful in affliction. It is powerful, because it shows that even affliction itself can make man nobler than he was; and that there is a gracious eye which marks the conflict, and is ever ready to smile with more than approbation on the victor. To the indigent, to the oppressed, to the diseased, while life has still a single sorrow to be borne, it flings on the short twilight a portion of the splendour of that immortality into which it is almost dawning; and when life is closing, it is itself the first joy of that immortality which begins.

The devout enjoyments of a grateful and confiding heart, then, are truly the noblest enjoyments of which that heart is capable,—not more from the purity, and vividness, and permanence of the direct pleasures themselves, than from the influence which they diffuse on every other pleasure, and on every pain of life. When we have accustomed our minds to the frequent contemplation of His perfections, who, in requiring of virtue the little temporary sacrifices which it may be called to make to duty, has not abandoned the virtue which he is training by such voluntary sacrifices, for excellence, to which every thing that can be sacrificed on earth is comparatively insignificant; it is then that we learn to enjoy with a delight which no others can feel, and

to suffer almost as others enjoy; that even the aspect of nature itself appears doubly beautiful in our eyes, and that every thing which it presents becomes, in one sense of the word, our own, as the work of our God, and the dwelling of those whom we love.

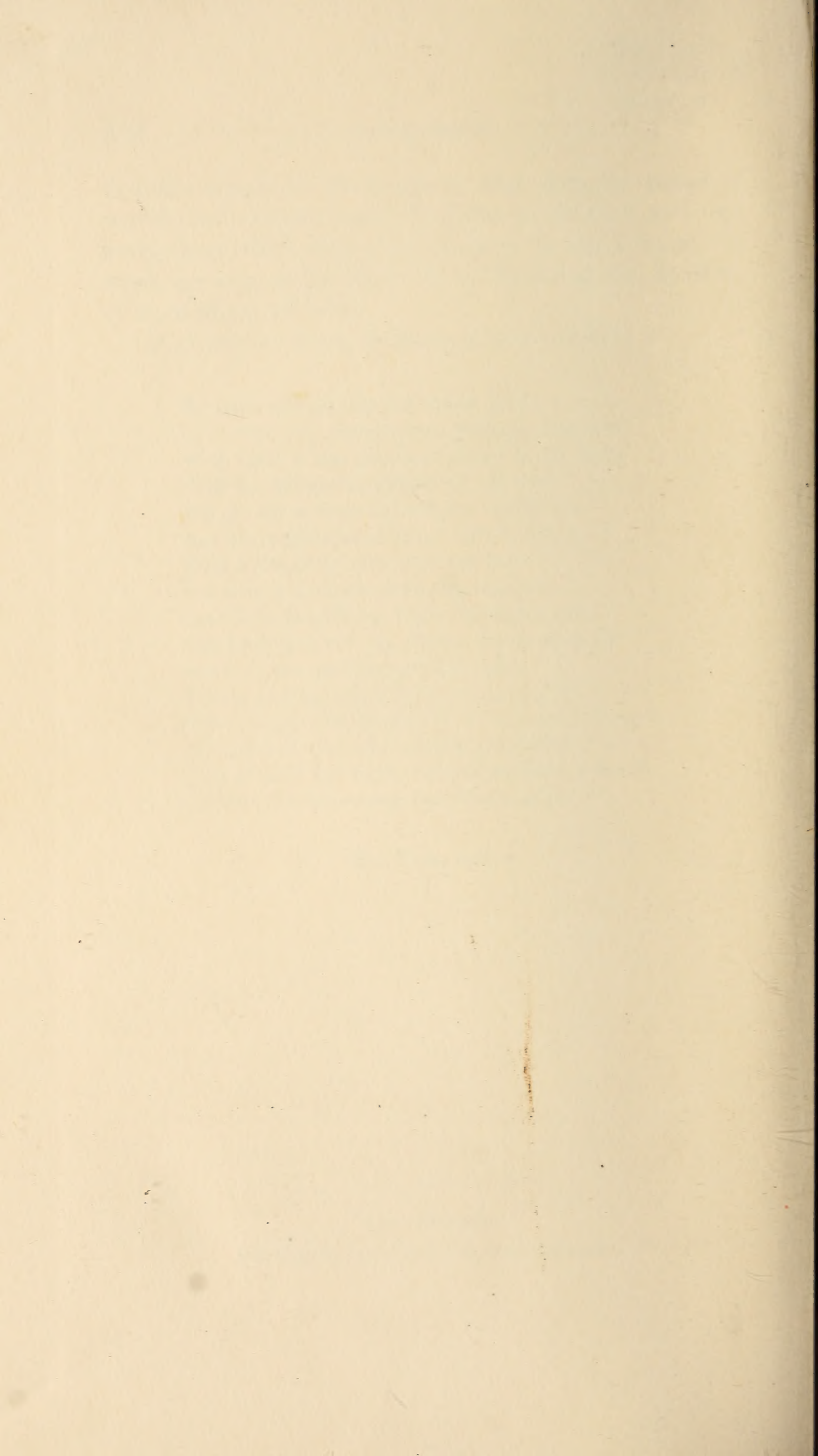
“He,” says Cowper, speaking of such a mind,

He looks abroad into the varied field
Of Nature, and though poor, perhaps, compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy,
With a propriety that none can feel
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to Heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say, “My Father made them all.”
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind,
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That plann’d and built, and still upholds, a world,
So clothed with beauty, for rebellious man?¹

¹ The Task, book v.

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